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SCRUTINY

A Quarterly Review

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SCRUTINY

A Quarterly Review

Edited by

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F. R. LEAVIS DENYS THOMPSON

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A CURE FOR AMNESIA

THE English have been unfortunate in writers about their country. Gibbs' *A Cotswold Village* (Cape, 3/6d.) is representative, a sticky confection, the literary effort of a clubman down among the rustics, a Nature Lover fond of cricket, beer, and blood sports. A gentleman in his view is a person who sends in no bill to the Hunt for a loss of fifty fowls, and in praise of the villagers he can only produce a smug approval of their morals. Almost every page is littered with clichés, floating in Ruskinese, and quotations from Horace are liberally applied. The author was at Eton. After the war we have Mr. Henry Williamson. Upon reading *The Village Book* (Cape, 7/6d.) anyone could have foretold that his next effort *The Labouring Life* (Cape, 7/6d.) would be a Book Society runner, for in these two books of mainly pointless anecdotes there is nothing to disquiet the comfortable. In the former there is an interesting note (p. 68) on idiom, and in the latter there are one or two pages on the same subject. If Mr. Williamson had been brought up on Sturt's books, he might have produced some useful observations: as it is, they are conventional and superficial, if not grossly indulgent in feeling like Gibbs. From neither writer does one gather that any particularly significant change has happened to English life in the last hundred years; and books like these discredit those who have something to say.

That the power age destroyed the agricultural basis of life and thereby the best soil for a satisfactory civilization should be a generalization trite enough. D. H. Lawrence realized this and its implications for us more acutely than any—see *Twilight in Italy*, p. 217, *Mornings in Mexico*, p. 145, and *Letters*, passim—but he had not the opportunities for particular, local observation that fell to George Sturt (he wrote as 'Bourne,') whose percipience is comparable only to Lawrence's. It was very lucky that there should have been an observer as intelligent and aware as Sturt to record the dying, and some of the life, of the English rural culture; how fine it was, how fertile for individual living, does not seem to be known. He beautifully elucidates this popular civilization, and a

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reading of his work should save a good deal of misapprehension among critics of *Scrutiny*.

In the best of his available books, *Change in the Village*, Sturt describes the peasant system:

> 'The "peasant" tradition in its vigour amounted to nothing less than a form of civilization—the home-made civilization of the rural English. To the exigent problems of life it furnished solutions of its own . . . People could find in it not only a method of getting a living, but also an encouragement and a help to live well. Besides employment there was an interest for them in the country customs. There was scope for modest ambition too. Best of all, those customs provided a rough guide as to conduct—an unwritten code to which, though we forget it, England owes much. It seems singular to think of it now; but the very labourer might reasonably hope for some satisfaction in life, nor trouble about "raising" himself into some other class, so long as he could live on peasant lines. And it is in the virtual disappearance of this civilization that the main change in the village consists.' (See the whole chapter, *The Peasant System*).

But to notice his work is to quote it: one can only summarize inadequately. The lives of the peasants were fulfilled, their relation to each other and their environment adjusted, in a way now unattainable by anyone. They subsisted upon what their industry could produce from the soil, they lived in touch with the seasonal rhythm, and with it they inherited a 'religious sentiment, pagan, not Christian.' There was delight in their work itself, however arduous, daylong and lifelong; it was interesting and varied for men and women were learned in numerous exciting crafts, and before the enclosure of their commons the peasants were independent of wages, enjoying a comparative prosperity. Even after the enclosures, the country work for the labourer was interesting, almost worth doing for its own sake, 'when it still called for much old-world skill and knowledge, and when the praises of the master were the praises of an expert who well knew what he was talking about. On these terms, it was no mean pleasure that the able labouring man had in their labour. They took a pride in it . . . And master and man were not greatly out of touch in the matter of civilization. It made

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a vast difference to the labourer's comfort.' He was in touch with the ideas and purposes of his employer, and as the demand for labour was steady, 'they enjoyed what their descendants would consider a most blissful freedom from anxiety.' And as the farmers were the inheritors of a set of rural traditions nearly akin to those of the peasants, the townsmen too 'were extremely countrified in character.'

Where work was the staple of living, leisure was little valued. But with the modern labourer's employment 'the money-valuation of it is the prime consideration; it is a commercial affair; a clerk going to his office has as much reason as the labourer to welcome the morning's call to work. As in the clerk's case, so in the labourer's: the act or fruition of living is postponed during the hours in which the living is being earned; between the two processes a sharp line of division is drawn; and it is not until the clock strikes, and the leisure begins, that a man may remember that he is a man, and try to make a success of living.' The problem raised by this passage is central and urgent; when work is adjusted to needs and reduced to four hours a day or less, men may forget that they are men. The modern worker, factory-hand or millionaire, is unfitted by the nature of his work to make use of his leisure for any real recreation: they destroy themselves in commercially purveyed decreations. And (pp. 206-208) Sturt compares two cases, typical of the old and new systems; first, of the impoverished versatile jobbing labourer, proficient in a dozen crafts, rich in folk wisdom, he says:

> 'He is a man who seems to enjoy his life with an undiminished zest from morning to night. It is doubtful if the working hours afford to nine out of ten modern and even "educated" men, such a constant refreshment of acceptable incidents as Turner's hours bring to him.'

And then he shows how the contrasting case miserably fails to provide any kind of living.

Again of Turner Sturt notes:

> 'At the outset he saw and had part in those rural activities, changeful, accomplished, carried on by many forms of skill and directed by a vast amount of traditional wisdom, whereby the country people of England had for ages supported themselves in their quiet valleys. His brain still teems with recollections of all this industry . . .'

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And throughout he insists that at the core of this beautifully sufficient culture there throve a life-giving tradition. The Village he describes was not representative of the English popular civilization; the Villagers were descendants of 18th century squatters, and in other places, he suggests, the tradition could put forth its 'fairer, gentler features,' offer still better opportunities for living. But the measure of satisfaction they enjoyed they owed to tradition; 'they had a civilization to support them,' and they would not have adapted themselves so successfully, had there not been 'at the back of them a time-honoured tradition teaching them how to go on.' But the tradition was not static, taken over like a bank-balance. 'You must obtain it by great labour,' as Mr. Eliot has remarked in *Tradition and the Individual Talent,* and this truth is finely exemplified by many passages in *Lucy Bettesworth* (a book worthy of its author, especially the latter chapters), in the chapter on *Our Primitive Knowledge,* for instance, where he says of traditional knowledge not to be picked up in schools:

> 'But after all, it is only a preparation. Skill cannot act upon knowledge, nor the adaptation be made, nor the struggling beauty begin to appear and fascinate us, until the owner of this knowledge adds judgment to it . . . It is by judgment—that product of personal experience; that skill of the intelligence; that incommunicable knowledge which every workman must acquire afresh for himself because none can impart it to him—that the final judgments are perfected (p. 218; cf. p. 129 seqq., p. 183 seqq.).

Sturt's work is admirably adapted to education, and specially for a literary training it offers precise elucidations and analogies for literary tradition and criticism. And all of this note is meant to bear on literature. The tradition which Sturt recorded has much to do with the success of *The Pilgrim's Progress* and with that of Hardy and Mr. T. F. Powys; the pleasure derived from reading Hardy's novels results not, as is commonly assumed, from literary art—his literary technique is naïve and clumsy—but from contact with the rich traditional country round of life. An understanding of this life will help to explain how Shakespeare's use of language differs from Milton's, in what way the idiom of newspaper and best-seller and advertising is destructive of fine language and of

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fine living, and why, since English traditional culture is dead, it is of the first importance that tradition should be sustained through literature. And the education to be had from Sturt would put to better ends the naïve enthusiasm of the later Georgian or pylon-poets. To revert, the expressive rural speech was related to rich and decent living, and contrasts with our mechanical suburban idiom, the evidence of shallow, insignificant existence. Sturt's villagers had a fine social life: the English middle classes (*i.e.* most people) have to-day no personal life, are incapable of relations with each other. Instead we have the imitation of such a life described in *Stardust in Hollywood* (see the account of the Breakfast Club and compare English Rotary and similar associations and the pathetic attempts to recreate a genuine social club in the garden-suburb or city).

It was fortunate again that Sturt should have been in a position to give an insight into one of the folk arts of the rural civilization in its flourishing state. Not much of *The Wheelwright's Shop* can be quoted; it is out of print and hard to obtain; and long passages of it have been used in a recent book. But it is likely to be considered a great book by anyone who agrees that *Change in the Village* is a work of rare importance. Sturt himself learned the craft from 'the men, eight friends of the family'—they were not 'hands' on the same footing as dock facilities and electric power, and before Sturt's time a skilled man was known as 'Master' So-and-so. Learning the art (a matter of years) was a complete education, compared to which the most expensive school education obtainable nowadays seems a sterilization; the same integrity which prevented the men from taking advantage of their young employer's inexperience made them ashamed 'to have to do work twice over because the original material had been faulty'—any piece of work had to last for years. Nor was this integrity peculiar:

> 'I should soon have been bankrupt in business in 1884 if the public temper then had been like it is now—grasping, hustling, competitive. But then no competitor seems to have tried to hurt me. To the best of my remembrance people took a sort of benevolent interest in my doings, put no difficulties in my way, were slow to take advantage of my ignorance. Nobody asked for an estimate—indeed there was a fixed price for all the new work that was done.' (p. 53).

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And commercial travellers treated him well; one could hardly be persuaded to take a large order lest his client should be overstocked. The men, though overworked and underpaid, enjoyed life; they were fulfilled in their work, and their work was totally useful.

The traditional ways of life were destroyed by being ground in with the commercial machine, but no higher standard of living can compensate for the loss:

> 'Although throughout their long years they have worked continually for a profit of which they have been as continually relieved by others, country labourers are still able to carry with them into old age a set of feelings, of tastes, developed in them by the nature of country industry. In the labour-market no one is able to strip away from them that one possession. They are connoisseurs of local handiwork; they know from the inside the meaning and attractiveness of simple outdoor crafts; in the texture of materials—timber, stone, lime, brick-earth, thatching-straw—there is something that goes familiarly home to their senses; and so there is in the shape of tools, such as they themselves have handled. The fields, the meadows, the woods, the quarries, have never been to them a form of riches, but have always been an interesting theatre for the play of their strength and skill and knowledge; and the intimacies of the village are theirs too—the village where talk has even to-day so much of the folk tinge, and where men's habits are so self-reliant and so little used to inspection and organized routine.' (*Lucy Bettesworth*, p. 109).

And finally, to summarize the loss, the reason for the accomplished efficiency of this English culture: 'The coherent and self-explanatory village life had given place to a half-blind struggle of individuals against circumstances and economic processes.' To repeat a phrase used earlier in *Scrutiny*, the organic community has dissolved, and with it 'the only basis for a genuine national culture.' An organic community existed in Sturt's village—a society, engaged in pursuits satisfying in themselves and relevant to human ends, whose members were finely adjusted in their relations to each other and to their environment. England consisted of such communities: 'Although Farnham fancied itself a little town,

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its business was being conducted in the spirit of the village . . . Men worked to oblige one another.' Any idea that theirs was a merely stupid or brute contentment could not survive a reading of Sturt's books; and it could hardly occur to anyone who is aware of the manifestations of traditional rural art, for instance in pottery, furniture, churches and tombstones, which often exemplify what tradition could do for local talent, what vitality it imparted and what variety it allowed—for the peasant was not standardized, as someone suggested to me. For amplifying the point, see J. E. Barton's *Purpose and Admiration* (Christophers, 10/6d.), a most useful book to anyone engaged in education; there are very few books on art so apt for training sensibility. Its undue optimism need not impair its value.

Three other books by Sturt—*A Farmer's Life, Memoirs of a Surrey Labourer, William Smith, Potter and Farmer*—are complementary to those already named; the persons they describe (to say they are shrewd, tough, self-reliant and extremely well-educated is not enough) are excellent advertisements for the tradition which produced them and Sturt himself. He is incomparably more intelligent and more important than the conventional classics. Tone and feeling (except perhaps in the early *Bettesworth Book*) are impeccable, over a tract where there have been disasters, and he is as potently evocative of what we have lost as Lawrence; the writings of the two supplement each other. That Sturt has further affinities with Lawrence is hinted at by the extracts from his unpublished journal given by Arnold Bennett in his back-slapping introduction to *A Small Boy in the Sixties*, a not very interesting book.

There must be a number of books on the various forms of the culture that Sturt describes. Immediately notable are *England's Green and Pleasant Land*, an angular and salutary book, *A Shepherd's Life*, of which the opening chapters are poor and not representative, and *Small Talk at Wreyland* (that the author is unintelligent and artless strengthens his testimony to the life of a flourishing community).

Instead of continuous organic life, we have organization—machine technology with a malignant impetus of its own, progressing away from human ends. Where before a man had a place in a desirable scheme, now as worker he is an easily replaceable component, and as consumer, a mere goose to be fed with a

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force-pump—no way has yet been found of eliminating man as the circulator of the necessary monetary lubricant. In the past, satisfying ways of living have grown out of the struggle with the natural environment for the means of subsistence; now men are pitted against each other in a squalid fight for survival in which art, religion and morality go by the board. The power age was founded on a cypher (the decimal) and it is ending in cyphers, on bank balances.

If the wheelwright's shop was representative of the old, its destroyer and successor, the car, symbolizes the new civilization. It is the foundation of American prosperity, and typical of the stimulated pleasures to which machine workers are adapted; and in America, according to *Middletown*, it has destroyed the family, reduced religion and radically altered social custom.

It is one of the chief and most demoralizing insulators from the sources of vitality; and with its intentionally rapid rate of obsolescence it is typical of the mass-produced commodity which has to have a demand created for it. The wheelwright's training constituted an excellent education and his work a full and humanly sufficient life: the garage-hand's apprenticeship is usually a course in petty deceit. The contrast between the wheelwright's shop and the motorcar trade as a specimen of amoral big business will bear a great deal of working out in detail. (See *e.g.* p. 29 of *The Nemesis of American Business*).

One sometimes meets a touching faith that the machine will produce a culture of its own, as right as those of pre-power civilizations. But we are already, here and now, in the midst of any 'culture' the machine is likely to produce spontaneously, and contemptibly inadequate it is. Our suburban (no matter where you dwell) civilization is already well adapted to the machine, and likely to become more so as the memory of something more sufficient withers, and in it humanity is uprooted and atrophied in an unprecedented way and on an unprecedented scale. Mass-production demands sales, sales need advertising. So the decisive factor is the 'adman,' and what we derive from him; and what more we are to expect may be found out from the book which was the occasion of the note *Advertising God* in *Scrutiny* Vol. I, No. 3; the extent to which the 'adman's' civilization is in operation is less adequately realized than most problems. That the menace recorded

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in that note was not an extravagant Americanism, but part of the atmosphere of this country, is enforced by the February issue of the *Advertising World* (16 Plough Court, Fetter Lane, E.C.4, 1/-). It is a frightening document, the evidence of a hostile world, organized, solid, effective (see the article *Getting Culture through Advertising*). It is an apt educational tool, and it also disposes of the contention that the 'adman' does not after all exhibit a very high degree of cunning: the diagram on p. 96, showing a tree of 'human urges' branching out of the 'urge to race continuance,' is not reassuring. 'The unremitting, pervasive, masturbatory manipulations of "scientific" Publicity' degrade man into an unpleasant kind of ape; 'modern youth' is as the advertiser would have it, cheaply sophisticated but vacuous, cocksure but easily coerced by suggestion, inoculated in fact against living. 'Coerced' is not the right word; for as the wheelwright and the peasant gained a complete education from their environment, so the young to-day absorb their ideas and attitudes from the formative advertising environment.

Two quotations from Vol. I should show why it is part of *Scrutiny's* policy to make Sturt's work known, and how it implements any serious education:

> 'The memory of the old order, the old ways of life, must be the chief hint for, the directing incitement towards, a new, if ever there is to be a new. It is the memory of a human normality or naturalness (one may recognize it as such without ignoring what has been gained in hygiene, public humanity and comfort)' (p. 178).
>
> 'To revive or replace a decayed tradition is a desperate undertaking; the attempt may seem futile. But perhaps some readers of *Scrutiny* will agree that no social or political movement unrelated to such an attempt could engage one's faith and energy. The more immediate conclusions would seem to bear upon education' (p. 31).

The danger is that a new generation may accept the present dessicating environment as normal, that when every artisan is on the two-car standard it may be forgotten that there are more human ways of occupying leisure than valeting machines. If any education can obviate this, the kind of education needed is to be

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found in Sturt. You cannot nowadays grow Sturts like potatoes—the soil produces Rotarians; and it should be one of our chief concerns to bring it home that the present plight of civilization is abnormal, to combat the poisoning acedia which declares that it's all happened before. Detailed suggestions for the use of Sturt's works in the teaching of English and other subjects have been made in *Culture and Environment*; so one need only repeat here, in the hope of being taken literally, that they are valuable educational tools. They provide what the 'fortifying classical curriculum' is supposed to provide, but actually impedes. Or to use another idiom, they are admirably adapted 'to preserve the individual from the sole centrifugal impulse of heresy, to make him capable of judging for himself and at the same time capable of judging and understanding the judgments of the experience of the race.'

DENYS THOMPSON.

SOURCES

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REVALUATIONS (1)

JOHN WEBSTER

THE effervescent enthusiasm of Romantic critics for Elizabethan drama is suspect to-day just as most Romantic poetry is suspect. Lamb and Swinburne and their imitators have been responsible for a great deal of cant and nonsense. In praise and dispraise they are fulsome, hyberbolical, often hysterical. Lamb is often positively embarassing—witness his note on Act IV sc. iv of *The Revenger's Tragedy*, and he is always getting between us and the author (for many people his note on the torturing of the Duchess of Malfi has become almost part of the play). Swinburne, like some Soviet shock-trooper exhorting feeble comrades, batters and bullies us into thinking every play-wright a demi-god, yet he leaves us tired and bewildered, no better fitted to read these play-wrights with more informed enjoyment. Some kind of reaction against this uncritical adulation was bound to set in and William Archer's lively attack must have been welcomed by many readers just because it did attack. Yet *The Old Drama and the New* is deplorably beside the mark. In drama Ibsen has no absolute value and to demonstrate that Elizabethan plays bear no resemblance to his plays tells us little about their merits or defects. For Archer, drama is 'the faithful reproduction of the surfaces of life and of individual refinements of character—we can recognize as good, in harmony with an inevitable tendency, any abandonment of exaggerative, in favour of soberly imitative methods. The task that reason prescribes to the dramatic artist is to exhibit character by the same means by which it manifests itself in real life.' But Elizabethan drama, as he rightly noted, is far nearer to opera and to ballet than to 'a sober and faithful imitation of actuality.' His mistake was to assume that poetic drama was nothing more than a substratum of correct reporting

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with poetry and rhetoric added as an ornament—'conversational and heterogeneous adjuncts' he calls them. These heterogeneous adjuncts might very well be good literature, but good literature was not the same thing as good drama. A good drama in fact might be poor as literature. Lamb and Swinburne concur with Archer in assuming the truth of this disastrous distinction between drama and literature. Archer of course prefers good drama; Lamb and Swinburne plump for good literature, and for the sake of a few lines of fine verse willingly put up with any amount of dramatic ineptitude. Yet both they and Archer should have recognized that verse is itself an unnaturalistic convention and that the mere use of it leads to the adoption of other conventions of presentation equally unnaturalistic. Among the pre-war critics W. B. Yeats insisted on these truths in essay after essay, and from him at least Archer might have learned to put Ibsen's aims and methods out of mind when reading Elizabethan plays.

Since the publication of *The Wheel of Fire* there is little excuse for anyone approaching the Elizabethans with Archer's particular preconceptions:

'We should not look for perfect versimilitude to life but rather see each play as an expanded metaphor, by means of which the original vision has been projected into forms roughly correspondent with actuality, conforming thereto with greater or less exactitude according to the demands of its nature . . . The persons, ultimately, are not human at all but purely symbols of a poetic vision.'[1]

Webster's tragedies are to be read then as dramatic-poems not as historical documents, police-court evidence, or detective-stories. If we read them in this way we shall be less inclined to fulminate against the reprobate and astonishingly inconsistent characters and may even forget the Duchess of Malfi's eldest son.

Webster's affinities with the mannered prose of the character-writers are evident in his verse as well as in his prose and it is not surprising to find that he belonged to the Overbury circle. The young wits about town who formed this circle carry on a tradition of elegant writing which derives from Sidney and Lyly, persists

[1]G. Wilson Knight, *The Wheel of Fire*, p. 16.

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in the epigrams and elegies of the '90's (*Paradoxes and Problems* is a typical product of this period) and develops into a new form the Theophrastian character-sketch. As satirists they have abandoned the grand style of Juvenal, and concern themselves with ridiculing the foibles and social lapses of polite society in London. (In France, the equivalent is the salon of Madame Rambouillet and the *préciosité* of Voiture). Their aim is to give witty and elegant form to their observations of character and manners. Fashions in elegant writing had altered since the days of Sidney and Lyly. Euphuistic wits had striven after elaborate formalism in sentence-construction and had garnished their discourse with curious and learned similes from handbooks of mythology and from the bestiaries. This newer generation concentrates on epigrammatic prose and cultivates the sententious maxim. Its conceits depend on word-play and run to extravagant hyperbole, and for their wit they depend very largely on the use of images from low life, common experience, and the sciences. Like Falstaff and Prince Henry they play at collecting 'unsavoury similes,' and often use them for satiric purposes in a way reminiscent of Swift and Pope—to see that 'the same reason that make a vicar go to law for a tithe-pig and undo his neighbours, makes them (princes) spoil a whole province, and batter down goodly cities with the cannon' is to anticipate Swift's favourite trick of 'deflation,' and they delighted in comparisons which are singularly apt though they shock us by the heterogeneity of the objects yoked together—Flamineo's description of the Spanish ambassador will serve as an illustration: 'he looks like the claw of a blackbird, first salted, and then broiled in a candle.' In their elaborate periphrases they often remind us of riddles—'Vengeance, thou murder's quit-rent,' and a good many of their fantastic comparisons suggest the riddle reversed—'The opinion of wisdom is a foul tetter that runs all over a man's body' (*i.e.* it's a plague). Again, Bosola having complained that for the returned soldiers there are no rewards, 'nothing but a kind of geometry is his last supportation,' 'Geometry!' exclaims Delio. 'Ay,' comes the answer, 'to hang in a pair of slings, take his latter swing upon an honourable pair of crutches, from hospital to hospital.'

Another marked feature of the writing of these wits, most of them admirers and imitators of Donne, is the persistent hankering

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after oxymoron—'superstition is godless religion, devout impiety.' Tourneur is particularly fond of it—'royal lecher,' 'good coward,' 'withered grace'; and in Webster we have the bodies of the Duke and Cardinal referred to as 'These wretched eminent things.'

Webster obviously belongs to this group of conceited and fantastic writers. In his tragedies there are several set 'characters'—Flamineo's thumb-nail sketches of the ambassadors, Antonio's descriptions of Bosola, the Duke, the Cardinal, and the Duchess, and the Cardinal's set piece on The Whore; and several discourses eminently characteristic of the satirical essayists—Flamineo's notes on lover's oaths, corruption, flattery, great men's reputations, and Bosola's little tirades about painted women. Flamineo and Bosola overflow with stock satirical matter and unburden their sage sentences, anecdotes and fables at the least provocation, and in a style which is every whit as precious as the essayist's:

'As ships seem very great upon the river, which show very little upon the sea, so some men i' the court seem colossuses in a chamber, who if they came into the field would appear pitiful pigmies.'

Webster is adept at manufacturing fantastic hyperboles—'I am studying the art of patience . . . To drive six snails before me from this town to Moscow; neither use goad nor whip to them, but let them take their own time.'

Like the claw of a blackbird—characteristically amplified to 'first salted, then broiled in a candle,' wit is valued for its own sake—conceit follows conceit as in a poem by a Metaphysical poet. Flamineo, like Vendice in *The Revenger's Tragedy*, or like Nashe, is a self-conscious virtuoso—how he enjoys himself—guying Camillo while ostensibly pushing his case; how he revels in adding fantastic detail to his caricature of the poisoner, Dr. Julio:

'He will shoot pills into a man's guts shall make them have more ventages than a cornet or a lamprey; he will poison a kiss; and was once minded, for his master-piece, because Ireland breeds no poison, to have prepared a deadly vapour in a Spaniard's fart, that should have poisoned all Dublin.'

There is the same delight in virtuosity in Vendice, the author of a 'witty' revenge (*The Revenger's Tragedy*). The Duke's corpse

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has been dressed in the clothes of Piato (Piato was Vendice in disguise). Vendice has been commissioned to assassinate the villain, Piato, who must have killed the Duke. Vendice is talking to his brother—"Brother, that's I, that sits for me: do you mark it? And I must stand ready here to make away with myself yonder. I must sit to be killed, and stand to kill myself. I could vary it not so little as thrice over again; 't has some eight returns, like a Michaelmas term.'

The same exuberance is characteristic of Nashe, whose grotesque comparisons and semi-burlesque exaggerations are recalled by the 'flyting' scene between Lodovico and Flamineo (*The White Devil*, Act III, sc. 1).

Vendice in admiring his verbal dexterity is apt to forget his main purpose. Flamineo's garrulity is equally superfluous on a great many occasions. Like Nashe in *The Unfortunate Traveller* he stands between us and the action interposing his comments, nowhere more so than in the quarrel between Brachiano and Vittoria in the penitent house. There are times indeed when he reminds us forcibly of old Polonius unloading his store of maxims without bothering to find out whether they are needed. It is not that his pregnant observations lack point, so much as that they are somehow not entirely relevant at the moment—Hamlet's bitterness about woman's painting springs out of the immediate situation and in turn affects it, and his macabre reflections on mortality have a different ring from the same sentiments in a homily. Flamineo and Bosola seemed primed up to deliver their notes whether any one listens to them or not, like bores who imagine themselves raconteurs. Why need Bosola swoop down on an old woman to unload his notes on cosmetics for instance? Webster's commonplace-book must have been packed with sentences, images and anecdotes, but when it comes to introducing them into the right dramatic situation he is often a bungler, and tends to make the situation for the sake of his image or essay. For the greater part of *The White Devil* Flamineo is no more than a lay-figure, a mouthpiece. Many readers must have felt equally suspicious of the flashes of 'pure poetry.' They remember Tennyson's habit of pinning dead butterflies to his poems—Cyril's handwriting like the wind in the corn—and cannot see any reason for letting Brachiano rather than any other of those about to die have the lines on death, or why

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Zanche should not perceive *her* soul driven like a ship in a black storm. The great moments indeed surprise us as excrescences.

The style of the conceited character-writer has obvious defects when it comes to dramatic writing. It is the style of an objective, rather cynical observer, commenting and reflecting upon men and actions, and constantly invites admiration for the elegance of its manner. It tends towards epigram and maxim, and uses simile rather than metaphor—Bacon's Essays represent it at its best. For dramatic utterance such a style of writing is too formal, too far from speech-idiom. We need only contrast the Cardinal's character of a whore with Ulysses' reaction towards Cressida. The Cardinal's definitions are neat and apt; they delight us by their ingenuity; but his sketch is a series of disconnected observations. We are left thinking of the last epigram and trying vainly to recollect the others. At the end of his speech we lack any clear conception of the whore, and are conscious only of an admiration for the Cardinal's talent as a wit.

In the phrase and in the single image Webster is often superb, yet he scarcely ever succeeds in writing a successful *passage* of verse, still less a whole scene. As in Bacon, we meet with the same short-windedness everywhere, the full stop of the aphorism, the suggestion of a penny-in-the-slot machine. He assembles three or four images in a passage and they remain discrete components, do not enforce or modify each other:

> pray observe me.
> We see that undermining more prevails
> Than doth the cannon. Bear your wrongs concealed,
> And, patient as the tortoise, let this camel
> Stalk o'er your back unbruised: sleep with the lion
> And let this brood of secure foolish mice
> Play with your nostrils, till the time be ripe
> For the bloody audit and the fatal gripe:
> Aim like a cunning fowler, close one eye
> That you the better may your game espy.
> (*The White Devil*: III 2).

In more than one particular this passage suggests Lyly—the same bestiary comparisons, the same non-progressive circling round

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a single idea, and the same undramatic interest, one feels, in finding still another analogy. Compare it with this paragraph from *Euphues*:

'Couldst thou Euphues, for the love of a fruitless pleasure, violate the league of faithful friendship? If thou didst determine with thyself at the first to be false why didst thou swear to be true. If to be true, why art thou false? . . . Dost thou not know that a perfect friend should be like a glow-worm, which shinest most bright in the dark? or like the pure frankincense, which smelleth more sweet when it is in the fire? or at the least not unlike the damask rose which is sweeter in the still than on the stalk? But thou Euphues dost rather resemble the swallow, which in the summer creepeth under the eaves of every house, and in the winter leaveth nothing but dirt behind, or the bumble-bee, which having sucked honey out of the fair flower doth leave it and loathe it, or the spider, which in the finest web doth hang the fairest fly.'

Webster's inability to write a sustained passage of verse finds its counterpart in his incompetent plotting. On the plane of action neither tragedy is worth much consideration. They could be taken as an illustration of Bosola's summing-up of life:

> Their life a general mist of error
> Their death a hideous storm of terror

(and the terror largely of the wax-works type). Mr. Lucas is willing to blame Webster's public for his melodramatic interests and effects:

'For the men who crowded the Phœnix and the Red Bull lived both in the theatre and outside it far more in the moment for the moment's sake than the cultured classes of to-day; accordingly it was a succession of great moments they wanted on the stage, not a well-made play. They did not at each instant look forward to what was coming or what had been. If a dramatist gave them great situations, ablaze with passion and poetry, it would have seemed to them a chilly sort of pedantry that peered too closely into the machinery by which they were produced. They did not want their fire-works analysed. They were in fact very like a modern cinema audience, with the vast difference that they had also an appetite for poetry.'

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But this is a poor explanation. The same public was equipped in the main with a grammar-school education which concentrated on a training in the use of language; it listened to speeches and sermons which to-day can be read only with difficulty; and it applauded plays as close-knit as *The Alchemist* and *Volpone*, and plays which made demands on its capacity to appreciate poetry and the patterns and symbols used in poetic drama—the tragedies of Shakespeare, for instance.

A far more plausible suggestion is that Webster wrote melodrama because he had a taste for it, and that in writing his tragedies he was concerned as a popular play-wright to turn out plays which would please every kind of play-goer. He starts from a story packed with incidents well suited to melodrama, and alters it very little. At times one suspects he wrote with his tongue in his cheek; Flamineo's interview with the Ghost of Brachiano, at least, suggests this. The Ghost is a genuine ghost—Flamineo the sceptic is hardly the man to suffer from 'vain imaginings,' and it carries a flower-pot—not even a harassed man would imagine a flower-pot. Flamineo seems his normal self—the curious observer, the investigator, the busy prying mind. Like a good journalist he keeps his head and interviews: Brachiano's views on the other world, the truth of churchmen's theories about communication with the dead, the best religion to die in, how long he may expect to live. After the Ghost has gone Flamineo runs over the events of the day, methodically listing his misfortunes:

> the disgrace
> The prince threw on me; next the piteous sight
> Of my dead brother: and my mother's dotage;
> And last this terrible vision—

That word 'terrible' rouses our suspicions. Flamineo seems to have been not in the least upset, but we see that the audience ought to have been thrilled, and are told so.

One supposes that the crude irony of Camillo locking himself up while the Duke cuckolds him is also a concession, though one cannot be sure, since the same trick is used again in *The Duchess of Malfi*, and it is no more indefensible than Cornelia's hanging about behind her curtain saving up her curse until it can chime in at the most melodramatic moment. The famous echo-scene and all the

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apparatus of dead hands, wax images, dancing madmen and dirge-singing tomb-makers in *The Duchess of Malfi* are equally suspect.

Webster hardly goes out of his way to provide pornographic interest—it is endemic throughout his plays. In *The White Devil*—adultery, a brother pandar to his sister and witty about it, an old gull comically cuckolded, and later made game of by his ducal master; a breezy trial for murder and incontinency, plain speaking on both sides; a lovers' quarrel in a house for penitent whores; a precocious young prince (even more a stock-figure than the old cuckold); and a great deal of miscellaneous satire from professed malcontents. Some of Flamineo's jests and observations are witty, of course, witty in the style of the character-writers and youthful makers of epigrams, and in an old tradition of indiscriminate abuse. In most of his satire Webster is a decidedly literary gentleman, and need be taken no more seriously than most of his contemporaries. With few exceptions they get unnecessarily excited about vice and display their cynicism with a little too much bravado—like the Donne of *Songs and Sonnets,* so that in their bawdry they are just as tiresome as in their chivalric sonnets and romances. Webster's audience was in this respect—despite Rupert Brooke's assertion to the contrary—as prurient and immature as the modern cinema-goer.

The White Devil almost exhausts the stock-resources of the contemporary tragedy of blood. A full equipment of Italian despots, desperate and cunning secretaries, assassins, magicians, poisoning doctors, sinister prelates, disguised avengers (how the Italian cunning fails when it's time to be killed off!), private executioners, a haunting curse, some fine stoic speeches, and of course a couple of lunatics, one pathetic, the other terrifying, and two or three scenes most affecting in their pathos. Add to this fine gallimaufry a number of spirited set-to verbal encounters (Webster excels in these dog-fights) and miscellaneous essays on alchemists, and the criminal underworld, and how incredible it seems that such an entertainment should fail in the theatre.

Mr. Lucas is compensated by 'great poetry' and by the noble bitterness of Webster the satirist. If anything can hold our interest through *The White Devil,* it is indeed this expression of the dominant moods and ideas of Flamineo, the small-minded malcontent, the pocket-Montaigne. Webster's obsession with 'wormy

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circumstance ' strikes every reader. He cannot say the simplest thing without giving it a sinister turn—as thus:

> You speak as if a man should know what fowl is *coffined* in a baked meat afore you cut it open.
>
> When knaves come to preferment, they rise *as gallowses are raised* in the Low Countries, one upon another's *shoulders.*
>
> Pleasure of life! what is't? Only the good hours of an ague!
>
> I would sooner eat a dead pigeon taken from the soles of the feet of one sick of the plague than kiss one of you fasting.

This fascinated brooding over the morbid and sinister almost imposes some kind of unity of tone. The obsession is too much an obsession to be made the basis of any comprehensive vision of life, yet because it is an obsession common in his time, Webster has value for us, as a writer who gives powerful expression to a predominant mood of his age. The same morbidity finds expression in the satires of Donne and Marston, in the tragedies of Shakespeare and Tourneur, in comedies like *Measure for Measure, The Widow's Tears,* and *Volpone,* Jonson's comedies perhaps being the most savage and bitter of all. And because this savage bitterness is so characteristic of the age we must be careful before crediting Webster with the supreme expression of it.

We are apt to forget or at least under-estimate the strength of the satiric traditions current during the life-time of Webster. From the later middle-ages the Elizabethans inherited methods and topics which served them in good stead in their controversial writing. Popular satire was particularly vigorous. It carried on from medieval flytings and fabliaux, from the fraternities of fools and knaves and drunkards, from the Dance of Death and the Masque of the Deadly Sins, from the mock-testaments and litanies, and saturnalian buffoonery of the Feast of Fools, and of course from the invective and satire of the medieval preacher. Popular satire fed by religious controversy developed many new forms in the hands of pamphleteers and writers of comedy, and while they catered for the vulgar, the new poets and dramatists developed the epigram and the Juvenalian satire for the educated public, and indulged in abusive personal controversy for the delight of the reader. We shall probably never determine how much of the

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melancholy and disillusion of the great dramatists reflects the general mood of the time, and how much it may spring from more purely personal sources. It is even more difficult to say how much of Webster's bitterness is personal, how much is derived from his reading, and his following of literary fashions, and how much is due to the times being out of joint. So much of Flamineo and Bosola suggests the urbane and precious satire of the character-writers rather than the terrible passages in *King Lear,* and is plainly 'literary' in its inspiration, conventional in style and matter. And there is a good deal too much evident pleasure in exposing the rottenness and corruption behind appearances for us to feel quite sure of his seriousness as a satirist. Mr. Lucas comments with justice that one suspects him of indulging his satiric vein because he found he had a pretty hand with the lash, and the fact that the satiric passages are distributed so equably through the play, and so often take the form of diversions, asides and general comment, as in an essay, increases our suspicion that Webster the satirist had no hand in planning the action. His most brilliant invective is not satire like Swift's which makes us feel how loathsome human beings are but the furious expressions of personal hatred which occur in quarrel-scenes. As spectators we stand above the fray and are untouched by the vituperation; it has no objective validity, and only tells us that Bosola for instance hates a certain Cardinal.

Nothing can disguise the oppressive monotony of the tragedies, despite Webster's untiring efforts to shock and thrill us to the end. 'Virtue in this disordered world is merely wasted, honour bears no issue, nobleness dies unto itself,' so completely and methodically that it is impossible to keep interested in it or to keep our disbelief suspended. It seems to tell us a good deal about Webster, but not much about actuality. If in *Hamlet* the court of Denmark looks mean, self-seeking, hypocritical and vicious it is because it contains Hamlet who serves as a measure of its lack of grace. In Webster's tragedies there is no such internal scale to measure depravity. Nor is there any possibility of perceiving any progress in depravity as the play goes on. His figures are never aware of themselves to the point of perceiving change—they live below the level of thinking creatures, make no attempt to foresee the probable result of any course of action, are troubled by no scruples, doubts

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or fears, or too much thinking on the event, suffer from no remorse, and apparently never learn anything from experience. As near as may be they are creatures of the moment, acting from animal impulse. In Shakespeare or in Racine or in Henry James the characters can be trusted to make the right comment on themselves and their actions; sooner or later there comes a moment of reflection when they realize their own essential baseness or worth. There are no moments of profound self-knowledge in Webster, and inside the play there is no adequate comment, for Flamineo's comments are everywhere superficial and second-hand, and his sense of reality is rudimentary—things just happen in the general mist of error, events are not within control nor are our human desires; let's snatch what comes and clutch it, fight our way out of tight corners, and meet the end without squealing.

A world peopled by such sub-moral figures and presented without comment might be taken as an implied satire on the actual world, but there are signs that Webster himself shares the belief of Flamineo and Bosola in dying gamely despite the general mist of error. For Mr. Lucas this belief means tragedy, and Webster is one of the masters. His puppets are always conscious of 'a sense of human destiny—not mere playing with skulls and cross-bones, but a noble thing.' In his tragedies we find an exposure of bitter reality, a salutary exposure which ranks him with Swift, but we are left with 'the feeling that for all the agony of transience, all the disillusion of hopes in vain fulfilled, there are no consolations but the bitter beauty of the Universe and the frail human pride that confronts it for a moment undismayed.' And it seems that Webster gave supreme utterance to the prevailing disillusion of the time. In this high estimate we think Mr. Lucas is mistaken, though he has the mass of readers on his side. One can only ask them in conclusion to re-read their Swift, their Jonson and their Shakespeare and with these touchstones of excellence consider Webster's contributions again.

W. A. EDWARDS.

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FESTIVALS OF FIRE

II. MÄSSIG, DOCH IMMER NOCH ETWAS FEIERLICH[1]

The son of Fornjotr and Nål,
Assailer, thwarter of the Aesir,
Dressed with care, took grape fruit
And two rashers of bacon, settled down
In a corner seat on the 9.30
From Euston. These provincial journeys
Are intolerable, but before a deal
Inspection must be made.

From the distance he saw rusted
Tram-lines, empty tip-buckets, a tangle
Of pipes, cast-iron cactuses
Sprawling over the bodies of stoves.
From the dark belly of the lower
Levels echoes unsealed, and a mildew stench
Laden with the dust of old workings.
The flashing fly-wheels are stilled.
Rotary furnaces have pallid bowels
For fire. The time for a merger is at hand.

[1]This is Section II of a poem in four sections. Section I appeared in the third number of *Scrutiny*.

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Am Jordan Sanct Johannes stand.
Count out the seekers by the river,
The awning of the waters is rent.
Standing on the lizard length, on the cold
Amethyst heather of Carn Brea, the druid
Hill, we have numbered beacon fires and
Drawn our augury. Brands in the land
From Kit Hill to Lyonesse, homage
On Valborgsmässoafton to Balder's pyre.
Wahn! Wahn! Uberall wahn!
Dance lady, for morn cometh, and dawn
Will blast the fugleman of your platoon.
Our Balham stenographer, the one
With hair picked out in fire-darts fretted
In the oblique light (as the lucciole
Spangle an Umbrian hill-hollow)
Is here in Nice with the junior
Partner, who, you know, is subject
To sciatica. They're due
At the Perroquet to-night. Hers is a body
Lithe in a tango as a young leopard's.'
It is the trappings that give pause. Insignia
Of usufruct and seisin are scattered
Hairpins in the parks, the evasive
Shrug of a blasé shoulder.
Larkspur clears the eye from the elder's charm.
Der Flieder war's—Johannisnacht.

Jeannine lay leisurely saying
(Sale blague) armsmoothly from the hay,
'My maidenhead is a spool for your
Unwinding (time and place left blank
And procedure optional),
My breasts I thrust into your hands as makeweight
Stakes in a deep gamble.' Such cheques
Offered in a scent-crowded air should be cashed
When there is no oscillation
In the markets, they should be laid by
And paraded for remembrance in a lean year.

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At San Pietro at the foot of the steps
Lucrezia received a paternal blessing,
Two wrought cushions of white damask
And a silken saddle. Her bridal
Chamber held as andirons two winking
Cupids, nicely chased, from which she was
To part too soon. Pinturicchio
Painted her mild, receptive, a Saint
Katherine wistfully expectant. In the June
Days, fishermen dredged the Tiber,
Tiber gay and mottled, ambling
In the summer days, for Giovanni
Duke of Gandia. Beauty,
The white powder, silently destroys.

Between heaven and earth, birth
And death, the suspension of kings,
Pendulum of priests. Their insulation
Annuls poverty, equates it with a Wall Street
Flutter, swung censers cloud the
Seeding light. Thrones in conclave violet and green,
Greenish smoke nuncio to the populace,
Herald the Sistine choice. Pius
Is in his Vatican, pile carpets
Muffle the sound of feet. Cabin'd
By the bare walls of Pomfret
Richard held court, walls whose dead weight
Deadened the replication of his monologue.

We have built a kingdom of metaphor,
Called words our viziers. The core
Of our 'becoming' is a fluent blur;
Immured in euphony
We have seen fit to discard
Our cradle for a Celanese cocoon.
With death as a competitor, Richard
Jostled necessity, we saddle
With cryptograms our rune.
Saxophones dumb the lyre,

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Acquiescent in a complacent drone:
By our sterility of invocation
We have called down on the funeral pyre
Fire, in its vocation
Of destroyer and purifier.

The words swish and rustle
Past the prow, waters by a sickly
Moon, lost in a dark strait.
A sorites under Röntgen rays.

Cooped, shall I never seen the sun,
In a cage at the budding of breasts?
Marcel at Combray *toujours*
Entouré de son âme. The cheats
Of sense move in a vowel frieze, cortège
Of sounds, stirring the thin air, airy
To air, alight with saffron sun.

RONALD BOTTRALL.

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EVALUATIONS (2)

CROCE

REALLY hard workers in the intellectual line are very impressive, for they are so few. There are still fewer who, neither blinded by the dust of their labours nor exhausted by the fatigue, can give concise and readable accounts of what they consider to be their results. I do not by any means believe that Croce always works hard when he writes—indeed, I think that in his 'philosophical' productions he is doing not much work at all—but at times he does. And that, I think, is one of the more reputable reasons for the reverence which, from 1915 or thereabouts, has attached itself vaguely to him. Whatever you think of the rest of the essay on Corneille, you must be impressed by the opening chapter: a rapid, but by no means confusing, review of all the critics of importance who have ever written on Corneille. In a note to another essay, Croce says: 'I believe I have examined all, or nearly all, of the literature of erudition and criticism, old and new, which is connected with Ariosto: this will not escape the expert reader.'[1] As far as I can see the statement is true ; to an expert reader it must be little short of amazing. Add to this, that Croce is historian, not of literary reputations alone, but of æsthetics, philology and logic. Add too that, when he is not writing on metaphysical and logical matters, his style is easy and even sparkling. A certain amount of reverence cannot be withheld. Nor can the question: 'How does the man do it? What is the source of his energy, and in virtue of what principles does he feel himself the master of so much matter?' To

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this question, which has presented itself to me many times, I can find only one answer. If it is true it should be sufficient, for it is Hegel.

'Hegel,' says Mr. Eliot, 'if not perhaps the first, was certainly the most prodigious exponent of emotional systematization.' For him, things became words, and words, uncontrolled by things, became 'indefinite emotions': a soft material he could mould as he wished, and thence proceed, with the lack of scruple which is born of confidence and the courage of success, to the solution of such problems as remained. Croce follows closely the same practice. 'No one,' continues Mr. Eliot, 'who was not witness of the event could imagine the conviction in the tone of Professor Eucken as he pounded the table and exclaimed *Was ist Geist? Geist ist . . .*' Similarly, no one who has not laboured through the *Logic* or the *New Essays in Æsthetic* can represent to himself the emotional atmosphere in which passages such as will often be quoted in this article appear appropriate, or even—given a fair amount of sympathy with the author—informative. Perhaps at the outset I should do what I can to display this atmosphere; but perhaps again that is best achieved by a rapid outline of Crocean doctrine. Such an outline is at any rate indispensable for an estimation of the *Æsthetic*.

Croce is no blind admirer of Hegel.[2] He is as little impressed as anyone by the discovery of dialectical moments in the poles of the magnet, the emergence of the Prussian monarchy, or the topography of the globe. Further, he realizes that, by the operation of the dialectic, all things threaten to be swallowed up into the sea of the Absolute, and he is as inexpert as most of us in the navigation of that sea. He says, therefore, that such navigation is unnecessary: that there are, rising up in the sea, rocks or islands on which any man can take his rest. They are the concepts. For Croce the concept has three marks: it is expressive, universal, and above all concrete. If concrete, it is fully real; if real, it must be permanent: that is, it cannot be at one moment, and cease from being the next. Hence while abstractions—as for example the bad, the ugly, and being and not-being themselves—are drawn into the vortex of the dialectic, to emerge, if at all, only in a metamorphosis—the dialectic passes the concepts by.[3] Art, which is a concept, will always remain art: it need not fear the dissolution prophesied for it by Hegel,[4]

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that on the voyage to the Absolute it would be absorbed into Religion or Philosophy.

Art has a second name, intuition ; and, as intuition, groups itself naturally with three other concepts: those of logic, of economic, and of moral action. These together with intuition make up the four activities of the mind, in which the mind exhausts itself: there is no fifth activity. They form two groups: intuition and logic are both theoretic—that is, they are concerned only with knowledge and are knowledge ; the economic and moral activities are practical—that is, they are actions. We must be careful not to consider any of them as in any way psychological ; as we shall see later, psychology, along with the other natural sciences, is for Croce completely alien to philosophy—and to adopt the psychological approach to his intuition is to play the part of Bishop Barnes towards an æsthetic Eucharist. To know what intuition is, all we can do is to think ourselves back into the moment when we first awakened to theoretic life. Our mind was filled with images, and with nothing but images ; we did not ask whether they were real, or indeed what they were. We just accepted them, as it were sank into them. We *were* the images. Then we were being active intuitively. And we must be active in an exactly similar way whenever we wish to enjoy a work of art. We must surrender ourselves completely to it, and have no part of our mind left over to ask questions. Thus Croce establishes, as the first step in his æsthetic, the independence of art, and its complete distinction from those functions of the mind which we should normally call truth-seeking or truth-enjoying. At a blow he rids himself of problems like that of the role of belief in poetry, by saying that such problems cannot arise. Whether he is justified in doing so, we are as yet hardly sufficiently advanced in his system to say ; but we may note in passing that the effects on his applied criticism do not seem too fortunate. He seems, we should normally say, to be emptying works of art of their significance. Because of his isolation of poetry from philosophy he feels himself entitled to dismiss the *Divine Comedy* as a collection of lyrics, embedded in wholly alien matter. Because of the autonomy of art, he is bold enough to dismiss all allegory. He may of course mean nothing more than that *romans à clef* and their like are reprehensible, in which case he is probably right ; but, appealing to his essay on Dante once again, it is

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difficult not to feel that at his hands the figures of the *Divine Comedy* suffer a degradation. After reading that essay I for one am compelled to doubt whether he could read an *auto* by Calderón with adequate understanding.

But to proceed with the system. If concepts, according to Croce, escape the dialectic, they do not remain inviolate long. Upon them there operates a principle which, to all except a disciple, must appear equally mortal. He calls it *synthesis a priori*.[5] All concepts, though distinct one from the other, and permanent in that distinction, are, by their own nature and the nature of the mind, at the same time identical one with another. The word 'identical' is strong, but I do not think it exaggerates: I wish, if possible, to get main outlines clear. Let Croce speak for himself: 'What is thought is never *a* concept, but always *the* concept, the system of concepts.'[6] 'The concept is . . . all distinct concepts. But each one of them is, as it were, distinct in that union . . . the thinker, when thinking reality, can think it only in its distinct aspects, and in this way only he thinks it in its unity.'[7] Perhaps an illustration may help. Art, as we have seen, will not die into philosophy—is at the present moment, and always will remain, *toto caelo* distinct from it (let me note that for Croce, philosophy is the same thing as logic); nevertheless art is philosophy, and philosophy is art. How does that come about? Something in this way: art, being the first activity of the mind, is logically conceivable apart from philosophy—we do not need to philosophize first, to become artists. But philosophy or logic, being the second activity, demands art as a necessary condition of its existence. Philosophy brings concepts, but concepts are real only as manifested in intuitions; and intuitions are already the products of art. What is philosophy must therefore also be art. But the converse is true as well: for it is only 'logically'—that is, abstractly—that art exists apart from philosophy; reality has nothing to do with abstractions. We shall see later that the adjective 'first,' applied to the activity of intuition, has no real meaning. The mind, in any manifestation of itself, manifests the whole of itself: what is art, being a product of the mind, must therefore be philosophy as well—for philosophy, no less than art, is part of the mind. The *Divine Comedy*, therefore, is both art and philosophy; but we must add—remembering Croce's judgment on the *Divine Comedy*, which we have just read; remembering also

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that concepts in their *a priori* union are yet distinct—that as art it is not philosophy, and as philosophy not art. I despair of making this thing clear: perhaps however clarity is not what I should aim at. Let me return to the image of rocks in the sea, which I used of the concepts. This can be made more exact. The concepts do not stand as rocks in the sea: rather the sea, at any and every moment, congeals itself—the whole of itself—into any one of the rocks. This rock is thus all the rest of the rocks. The image has been stretched to the point of absurdity ; but that is not wholly a defect.

When Croce, in the name of the independence of art, expelled from it consideration of truth, it seemed perhaps that the price of independence, inanity, was to be a heavy one. But now the tables are completely turned. Art, being merely art, is at the same time the whole cosmos. Further, art itself is an abstraction: what is real and what only is real is an individual work of art. Each work of art, then, contains the cosmos. In it, says Croce,[8] ' there breathes the life of the whole, and the whole within the life of the individual ; every pure work of art is itself the universe . . . In the poet's every tone, in every creature of his imagination, lies all that human destiny contains—all hopes, all illusions, all joys and all sorrows, the splendours of man and his humiliations.' This conclusion, which might seem paradoxical to some, Croce hails as a confirmation of his theory. The character of ' totality ' belonging to a work of art is, he says, that reality of which many critics have caught a glimpse when they have said that art is ' universal.' Which is, of course, possible ; but must be left to the critics themselves to decide.

For a second character of the synthesis interests us much more than its totality: namely, its unity. *Art one and indivisible* is an old cry, but it can never have been raised with such vigour as by Croce. In the first place, art for him is identical with its expression: we cannot ask what a poet meant to say, and judge whether or not he said it well—what he meant to say was what he said, and we must leave it at that. Here Croce makes a shrewd bid for popularity: for nothing more impresses the poetic public than the truism that, if a series of words is altered, it is no longer the same. Why a series of words should be pitched upon, by both Croce and the public, as the expression with which a poem is identical, is difficult to say. This series, says Croce, is itself a unity:

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not a succession of words, but a word. A poem is not divisible into cantos, stanzas and verses, an essay into paragraphs and sentences, a drama into acts and scenes, not even—in spite of Aristotle—into beginning, middle and end. A picture cannot be analysed into planes or forms or colours; nor a building, *qua* architecture, into masses. If we wish to consider a volume of prose, then we must consider the whole of it, and at once: 'the whole book or the whole discourse, from the first word to the last, including all that in it may seem accidental or superficial, including even the accent, the warmth, the emphasis, the gestures of the living word, the notes, the parentheses, the full stops and commas of the written.'[9] Literature we may not divide into *genres*—the lyric, the epic, the drama and so forth: if we do so, we commit what, according to Croce, is the 'rhetorical heresy' of criticism. If we consider separately the inspiration of a poem, finding this in contemporary conditions or events, then we follow the 'sociological' heresy; if we find it in the poet's biography, then we follow the 'psychological.' Nay more, we are forbidden to divide art itself into the arts. There is no such thing as music, apart from poetry, sculpture, painting and architecture: they are all one. Art, manifesting itself only in individual works of art, has the unity of these individuals: not to be broken down, even temporarily, with the aid of any critical instrument whatever. These, says Croce, are as useless for their supposed purpose, as is a knife for the disruption of a syllogism.[10]

The question whether criticism is possible immediately arises; and it is, I think, a grave one—perhaps the touchstone of Croce's system. But we must postpone it for a while, until we have considered his theory of criticism. This is part of his theory of the judgment, the product or manifestation of the second or logical activity of the mind. Upon intuition, entirely contemplative and allowing of no questions, there usually follows a state of mind which both allows and answers them. This is one of Croce's accounts of the process: 'I am for example in such a condition as prompts me to sing or to versify, and thus to make myself objective to myself; but I am objective and known only to the imagination, so much so, that at the moment of poetical or musical expression I should not be able to say what was really happening to me: whether I was awake or dreamt, whether I saw

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clearly or caught glimpses, or saw wrongly. When from the variety of the multitude of representations which preceded and which follow it I pass on to inquire the truth of them all (that is to say, the reality which does not pass), and rise to the concept, those representations must be revised in the light of the concept, but no longer with the same eyes as formerly—they must not be *looked at,* but *thought.* My state of mind then becomes determinate, and I say, for example: "What have I experienced (and sung and made poetry of) was an absurd desire, a clash of different tendencies that needed to be overcome and arranged, it was remorse or a pious desire," and so on. Thus, by means of the concept is formed a judgment of the representation.'[11] The quotation shows the role Croce intends the judgment should fulfil in the life of the mind; its terms are however too general to show the mechanism of judgment. This is once more—and I am afraid a second intrusion cannot be avoided—synthesis *a priori.* In every judgment an intuition as subject is synthesized with a concept as predicate; every judgment, being such a synthesis is, like a work of art, an indivisible unity. Really therefore neither subject is distinct from predicate, nor predicate from subject. In so far as its subject is individual, the judgment might be called singular; but in so far as this subject is the same as the predicate, it must be called universal. Further, in so far as subject and predicate are the same, all judgments are of identity. Finally, in so far as the concept exists only in the judgment—each judgment being unique—all judgments are definitions, and they are verbal definitions. Again, we are faced with a conclusion before which we might expect Croce to recoil; once again, however, he accepts it without flinching. It is just because definitions are verbal, he says, that they are real.

To apply this to criticism. Judgments of criticism have, naturally, intuitions as their subjects; and they have one common predicate, the concept art. Their common form, Croce says more than once,[12] is: A is (or is not) a work of art. Now, 'work of art' is itself an abstraction, and in any actual judgment it must disappear, to be replaced by a reality. If the work of art A is being judged, this reality can be no other than A itself. The judgment will then be, either *A,* or, if this seem not sufficiently articulate, *A is A.* It can certainly be no more than this. And as a matter of

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fact, we do occasionally find in Croce's essays judgments of this type. The grand conclusion of the essay on Ariosto, for instance, is: that Ariosto is a 'poet of harmony,' certainly—'but also of something else, of harmony developed in a peculiar world of sentiments . . . in fact, the harmony to which Ariosto attains is not harmony in general, but an altogether Ariostesque harmony.'[13] Of the *Divine Comedy* Croce says: 'The final synthetic image, which sums up all the impressions made by the poem in its different parts . . . is, in short, the image of Dante himself.' Romantic critics Crose condemns as being largely concerned with history and sociology. Their work, however, contains an æsthetic element. As they were not merely historians and sociologists, but also artists, they had the following valuable experience: 'When they began to discuss poets and their works in particular, Dante was revealed to them as medieval and at the same time not medieval, Cervantes as one who satirized chivalry but at the same time yearned for it, Shakespeare as the poet of the universe. In short, Dante was revealed to them as Dante, Cervantes as Cervantes, and Shakespeare as Shakespeare.'[14] It might be thought that these are mere rhetorical flourishes, not altogether inappropriate in a 'literary' exercise; I will therefore give one more quotation from a serious context, where the theme is that critical judgments and historical judgments are the same. To judge a work of art is at the same time to judge the 'historical complex' of which it is an integral part. Then, says Croce, giving an example of a critical judgment, 'To say that a thing is the fact which we call the *Divine Comedy* is to say what its value is, and so to criticize it.'[15] That is, apparently, by pronouncing a formula of baptism we summarize no small portion of the development of the Western World.

Croce can claim, and must be allowed, credit for a kind of consistency: one does not need however to be of a very distrustful nature to question whether it is more than terminological. Did Croce know only one judgment containing the term '*Divine Comedy*,' that judgment could hardly be so enlightening to him as he says it is. We have found in his essays some examples of tautological judgments; but if they contained nothing else beside they would hardly arouse either so much criticism or so much applause. Enthusiasts may revere as gospel something that says nothing, and founds its claim to reverence upon its saying

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nothing; but a protevangel which says something is first necessary to seduce them into enthusiasm. I assume therefore that somewhere Croce is inconsistent with his doctrine, and I propose to return to the beginning of his system to discover, if I can, where.

It is, I believe, at the very beginning; in fact, where the *a priori* synthesis enters. This principle identified or confused all concepts one with another: claiming it is true to keep them distinct in that identification, but offering not the slightest proof that this is possible. Now if all concepts are one concept, it is difficult to see what can result but immediate aphasia. In a universe consisting entirely of cats, when all cats are grey, there is, or there should be, complete darkness on the subject of their complexion. Or we may put it another way: each one of Croce's concepts—and later, because of the doctrine of judgment, each one of his intuitions—can as it were deputize for the universe. It can therefore be considered only as an indivisible whole. Of indivisible wholes there is no discursive knowledge: if there is any knowledge at all, then it can resemble only that of the Aristotelian God, which is an eternal contemplation. The Aristotelian God does not engage in conversation—but he is not so circumstanced that one expects it of him. Croce however is; and no ingenuous person, surveying the pile of books that have come from his pen, would judge that he has fallen short of that expectation. Here is our inconsistency; if we can, let us explain it.

I think it is to be explained by an error or oversight or trick which, for the moment, seems to put Croce on a level with Spinoza. Croce and Spinoza have this in common, that they seek to establish a monism, the one over against Descartes, the other over against the 18th century tradition in philosophy. Spinoza endeavoured to do so by sinking thought or knowledge among the infinity of attributes possessed by substance. It was, he said, merely one amongst such an infinity; correlated with each of them of course, for all attributes are correlated one with another: but not setting itself up over against the rest, as knowing them all. Yet in practice the rest of the attributes were revealed—one of them actually, the others potentially—only in thought or knowledge, and so the old dualism was restored. In an almost exactly similar way, Croce endeavours to sink his knowledge or 'expression'

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among the multitude of the concepts. If we confine ourselves for the moment to the concepts of the activities of the mind, only one of these, he says, namely the first, is 'expression.' Only one, that is, is expressive; as for him the form and the matter of expression are identical, only one for him is 'expressible.' As a matter of fact, he says in so many words that the concept or second activity, 'abstractly considered'—that is, considered as not yet synthesized with intuition—is 'inexpressible.'[16] Either then we know nothing about it; or we know about it, and dualism is restored. 'Inexpressibles' and 'ineffables' are the sign of a dualism, or at least of an uneasy, self-conscious one. And, indeed, dualism reasserts itself in the very sanctum of the Crocean system, in the intuition itself: it is at least doubtful whether this indivisible thing, of wholly monistic intent, is itself known. The question was raised by Aliotta, who is no unsympathetic critic; Croce's answer, for what it is worth, can be found at the end of the *Problemi di Estetica*.[17]

On an all-important point however Croce makes an advance on Spinoza, who quite happily persisted in employing the word 'idea' to denote, now the object, now the subject of knowledge. Croce sees the confusion threatening, and meets it—how? The remedy is drastic but, if it can be swallowed, effective. Whenever he finds himself face to face with an 'ineffable' or 'inexpressible' thing, the recognition of which as known would reveal him a dualist, he recognizes it indeed; talks about it, seeks to persuade us of its existence, of its 'ineffable' nature—but, he says, he does not *know* it. He discusses it—his lips move, his pen flies across the paper: but behind these movements there is no knowledge, no thought. What is behind them? As the mind has only two kinds of activities, theoretic and practical; as the mind, when not knowing, can only be acting: behind the movements on these occasions there is, he says, only the practical activity. Though he appears to be doing so, he is not making judgments; though he appears to be using concepts he is not, but using only pseudo-concepts. These are not a form of concept, or concepts in process of elaboration; they are something altogether different. They are not part of knowledge but, in the fullest sense of the word, actions. They are not, for example, concepts 'directed to action, but *are* themselves actions. Their practical character is

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not extrinsic, but constitutive.'[18] By means of them we are enabled to do a great many things, to 'manipulate and classify,' for example, and even the 'products of the theoretic spirit;' but we do so 'without knowing any one of them.'[19] In short, pseudo-concepts and all that is built upon them—the natural sciences, for example, and protreptic such as Croce writes—may be persuasive; but they are persuasive not as is a logical proof—for Croce such proof is at once impossible and unnecessary—but as are, we must suppose, the third-degree methods of the American policeman; or as were those of the Athenian orator, when he paraded beautiful women or weeping children before the court.

It may be objected that, after all, we are dealing only with names: that it does not much matter what Croce says he is doing, if only what he does is useful. The reply is that names are above all the things that Croce takes seriously. He does not rebaptize parts of his doctrine merely that they may appear consistent with the rest—as, in the old story, the priest rebaptized the beef a capon, so that he might eat it in Lent. Croce resembles much more closely a priest who, having performed this ceremony, should on the strength of it refuse to foot the butcher's bill. From the principle that in his criticism and other writing he is engaged, not in thought but in action, he draws the momentous conclusion that he is wholly free from supervision by thought. Thought and action are as distinct as any two concepts, and the one cannot encroach upon the other. Pseudo-concepts are elaborated and are useful, but how or why it is impossible to inquire. 'The formation of pseudo-concepts,' he says, 'is outside theory.'[20] 'The empirical or natural sciences,' being founded on pseudo-concepts, 'are indestructible by philosophy, as philosophy is indestructible by them.'[21] The upshot of all this is that, having arrogated to himself an omniscience of which, like the divine, evidence neither can nor need be given, Croce claims, when in combat with his critics, a divine invulnerability. It is impossible to attack him anywhere. Or we may say that, in a very useful sense, he has improved on the Hegelian Absolute. In my opening paragraph I compared this to a sea; Mr. Schiller, less politely, once called it a rag-bag, into which the philosopher may drop anything furnished by the universe, which embarasses him. In the practical activity Croce has a rag-bag which is always to his hand; into which he can

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drop anything which impedes him, out of which too he can fish up anything of which he feels the need, without having to explain its nature or provenance; into which, further, it is his duty to dip. For the practical, no less than the logical, is an activity of the mind; to have recourse to it is therefore no sign of weakness, but rather of fullness or completeness of the mind.

Hence the light-heartedness in which Croce bestrews his pages with phrases like: 'for the convenience of exposition let us posit. . .,'[22] 'ordinary discourse demands. . .,'[23] 'the necessities of life impose.'[24] Hence his repeated warnings that what he says must not be taken too seriously: 'the use of all forms of language for the purpose of dissertation . . . is accompanied by the danger of misunderstanding.'[25] Hence his drawing of distinctions which later he asserts to be 'philosophically valueless,'[26] and still later uses once again. Hence the difficulty of expounding his system: I have had to explain that concepts are distinct and yet are not so; that intuition is and is not the first activity of the mind; that judgments being singular are also universal, that being tautologies they are also informative; that criticism saying nothing yet says all. Hence, finally, Croce's unhesitating use in criticism of all the heresies which, in other critics, he roundly condemns. If he is to be articulate, he is forced to recognize a distinction between poetry, painting and sculpture; between beginnings, middles and ends; between expression and what is expressed; between form and matter. He even looks upon such recognitions as his duty: 'No philosophy of language or art . . . can eliminate the classifications of artists and of literary kinds, and those of the arts according to what are called means of expression.'[27] 'Among the difficulties of literary criticism . . . it is impossible that there should not be introduced, along with concepts that are scientifically (*i.e.* philosophically) exact, others which are not so . . . These are expedients, no doubt, and somewhat dangerous; but they cannot be dispensed with.'[28]

Again, perhaps the question may be raised whether we are not attaching too much importance to names. Croce's applied criticism may give his theory the lie; but what of that if the application is good? And again I must stress the reply that names are very important for Croce. Having rejected that of *thought*, he feels himself licensed to caprice: to fish up from the rag-bag, as it

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were, whatever he imagines will be most convincing at the moment. At one time he says[29] that the critic's office is that of the museum-guide, who takes us to the spot from where, he knows from previous experience, the picture can best be seen; at other times he spurns this comparison,[30] and claims as critic to be expressing the ineffable individual,[31] or to be thinking out its internal dialectic.[32] He wavers much more in matters of detail; these are, perhaps, of most importance in æsthetics, and I shall devote my last paragraphs to his treatment of them.

Take his dictum, 'Art is expression.' As I said, this has been most effective in drawing thousands to his banner: it seems so comprehensive, so simple, and to get rid of so many vexing problems. But if examined carefully, it is found to raise as many problems more. If we ask, 'What is expression?' we receive as answer (expression for Croce having no external reference or, as we should say in normal language 'expressing nothing') that 'expression is art.' The two terms are empty synonyms, and neither can shed light on the other.[33] To procure light, Croce is compelled to define further; and this he can do only arbitrarily. First he excludes[34] from expression what he calls the physical consequence of emotion: the yowl of pain, for instance, which a man gives when someone kicks him in the stomach. Behind this yowl, he says, there is nothing theoretic, no 'vision': that is, it is excluded from expression because it 'says nothing,' although we were told that this was a common character of expression. What would Croce do, it is interesting to ask, if faced by an exclamation in a language totally unknown to him? Would he dismiss it as a yowl, or accept it as one of those sighs which, we saw, contain within themselves 'the joys and the sorrows of human destiny'? Probably he would dip into the rag-bag, and so escape our pursuit.[35] But to continue: a second thing from which Croce distinguishes[36] expression is what he calls the 'externalization' of art. This is the transference of the artist's vision from the mind to the marble or to the canvas. Expression is over, he says, before either chisel or brush is raised: it is over once the 'vision' is over, and it is for the practical activity to decide whether this vision shall be followed or not by externalization. So far, so good: it would be obviously absurd to maintain that painters and sculptors do not need to develop a technique. However, Croce

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says that expression is not over when a poet has 'seen' what he wishes to write: in his case it is not over until the words themselves are formed, and the words themselves *are* the expression. It is difficult not to see caprice—or worse—here. If it is true that, as Croce says, a poet is not sure of what he wishes to write until he has written it: is not the same true of painters and sculptors, that not until they have painted or carved they are sure of their vision? Externalization in the case of literature is reduced, according to Croce, to proof-reading. We can therefore chide a painter for being unhandy with the brush; but a poet—not for solecisms, or redundancy, or cacophony—only for negligent reading of proofs. Solecisms, indeed, find Croce in a difficult position. He holds that all language is expression; or rather, all utterances (apart from yowls)—for language is an abstraction, and what is real is only the utterance, wherever and whenever made. Being unique, incommensurable and so on, there is no reason why it should be classed as Italian rather than as Chinese; and there is no possibility of our being taught to make it. How then, asked[37] one of Croce's compatriots, are we to behave in the elementary schools? If a boy uses a dialect word, are we to pass it? Are we never to correct any prose? Croce, recoiling no doubt from an obvious absurdity, said yes; but, he said, no general rules for correction, that is, no rules of grammar or of spelling, can be given; and the case of the dialect word must be decided on its own merits. One can only pity the teachers of Italian, who look up and are not fed. But most of all, I think, Croce reveals his instability on the subject of prose. In the *Æsthetic*[38] all prose, he said, was art—with this proviso, that it should be well written. It would be well written if well thought out: there were no such things as books sound in their doctrines, but badly written. Reflection on the case of philosophers like Schopenhauer and Kant perhaps gave Croce pause; at any rate, in the *New Essays*[39] he is to be found distinguishing between prose as expression and prose as a sign. As an expression, it is art; as a sign also it is art—but in addition a sign of thought. It has therefore two sides or aspects: an æsthetic and a logical, and Schopenhauer may quite easily be a wretched thinker and at the same time a good writer. But in this way is there no prejudice done to the much vaunted indivisibility of a work of art? Perhaps Croce himself thinks so;

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for, uneasy about his concession to common-sense, he goes on[40] to warn us that we must not be too ready to criticize the prose of philosophers. They should know how to write on their subject, he says; at any rate, they are not to be lectured on the art of writing by men of the world, men, that is, who have not lived through 'their mental drama.' The would-be critic of prose is given about as much help as the Italian schoolmaster.

Transferring his attention from form to matter, Croce is equally capricious. A general rule is enunciated and this time is obviously merely empty words; free play is thus given to Croce's moral and intellectual prejudices. To be articulate a critic must, as we know, have recourse to history and biography; he must not however take into consideration either the whole of a historical period or the whole of a biography. These are not the matter of a poem: but only that portion of the background, of the biography, which—*is* its matter. 'Those elements of fact which a critic must keep before him are those, and those only, which in fact enter into the construction of the work of art he is criticizing . . . those which are indispensable for the solution of the critical problem he sets himself.'[41] Anyone familiar with the literary essays will know how this works out: Croce condemns as matterless, and therefore mere *simulacra* of art, works which do not believe as he does that a woman's place is in the home; that are tainted with 'morbidity' or 'decadence;' that are not 'spontaneous' or 'lyrical' or 'warm with passion;' or that have pessimism as their theme. This last, he says, is logically impossible; and so reduces Leopardi to the rank of a love poet. But I need not labour this aspect of his work for English readers: they have the essay on Shakespeare, in many ways a commendable production, but surely the most irresponsible that ever issued on such a subject from so renowned a pen.

In this last-mentioned essay, Croce somewhere[42] speaks of Shakespeare and of Vico as two 'mighty spirits . . . apt frequently to overlook details and to make slight mistakes . . . convinced "that diligence must lose itself in arguments which have anything of greatness in them, because it is a minute, and because minute, a tardy virtue."' 'Vico,' he says, 'thus openly vindicated the right of rising to the level of heroic fury, which will not brook delay from small and secondary matters.' Of the

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heroic fury in Croce's philosophical works there can be no doubt: they avoid details—which cannot *en masse* be dismissed as secondary—they make a parade of unrelieved greatness, they are largely repetitive. At first they are impressive by their number, but then it is seen that there is no reason why they should not be twice as many, or indeed twice as few. As I suggested at the beginning, we may be grateful to them for setting Croce free for labour that few of us would care to undertake, and fewer still would carry through. But I do not think there is any pressing need for us to be grateful to them for any other reason.

JAMES SMITH.

NOTES.

I have had to prepare the above paper in the most barbarous of the provinces, where books are difficult to come by. I have been able to consult only four works in the original Italian, namely: the *Estetica*, the *Problemi di Estetica*, the *Nuovi Saggi di Estetica* and the *Saggio sullo Hegel* (all published by Laterza, of Bari). The translations from these works are my own, and references to them in the notes are to the Italian edition.

References to other works are to the translations published by Mr. Douglas Ainslie. In quoting from them in my text I have of necessity followed his version; but, for reasons which all his readers will appreciate, I have had no scruple in altering that version from time to time.

[1]*Ariosto, Shakespeare and Corneille*, p. 3, n. 1. [2]Croce gives an admirable summary of his attitude in the *Saggio sullo Hegel*. [3]*Logic*, pp. 102-103, 224. [4]At least that Croce says he prophesied. I am aware that the view is contested. [5]On this see the *Logic*, and especially the *Saggio sullo Hegel*. Croce takes the name from Kant; and, he says, the process too. On its importance for his thought, cf. *Logic*, p. 220: 'Mind, considered universally, is nothing but *a priori* synthesis.' [6]*Logic*, p. 268. [7]*Ibid*, p. 81. [8]*Nuovi Saggi*, p. 126. [9]*Logic*, p. 118. Croce is speaking of definition, but the words can quite as well be applied to our context. [10]*Problemi*, p. 251. [11]*Logic*, p. 150. [12]*Problemi*, p. 56, *Nuovi Saggi*, p. 83. [13]*Ariosto, Shakespeare and Corneille*, p. 94.

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[14]*Nuovi Saggi*, p. 174. [15]*Logic*, p. 294. [16]*Estetica*, p. 48. [17]*Problemi*, p. 481 ff. [18]*Logic*, p. 332. [19]*Ibid.*, p. 343. [20]*Ibid.*, p. 248. [21]*Ibid.*, p. 361. [22]Cf. *Estetica*, p. 14. The matter of expression is 'postulato per comodo di esposizione, ma effetivamente inesistente.' [23]Cf. *Logic*, p. 72. [24]*Ibid.*, p. 252. Distinctions between philosopher, artist, butcher, baker, jeweller, etc., are 'imposed by the necessities of life, but have no philosophical value at all.' [25]*Ibid.*, pp. 79, 100. [26]Cf. note 24. [27]*Logic*, p. 369. [28]*Problemi di Estetica*, p. 163; cf. *Nouvi Saggi*, pp. 290-292. [29]*Nuovi Saggi*, p. 229. [30]*Ibid.*, p. 77-78. [31]Cf. *Estetica*, p. 41. [32]*Nuovi Saggi*, pp. 181, 261, 272. [33]'When language is despoiled of its full capacity for significance, in order to equate it, or level it with expression in general, the manoeuvre is self-destructive. Language has become a gesture or a tune, and to compare a tune or gesture to language is now to compare a thing to itself.'—The late Prof. Bosanquet, in *Croce's Æsthetic* (Proceedings of the British Academy, ix, 1919, pp. 261-268). [34]*Estetica*, p. 104. [35]As a matter of fact, this is what he does. 'Si un'opera letteraria ci stesse innanzi come un'iscrizione etrusca; se non ne intendessimo la lingua, tutta la condizionalità storica, nella quale fu prodotta; non potrebbe sorgere nessun giudizio estetico.'—*Problemi*, p. 167. [36]*Estetica*, cap. 15. [37]*Problemi*, p. 217. [38]*Estetica*, p. 28. [39]*Nuovi Saggi*, p. 140; cf. *Logic*, pp. 111, 148. [40]*Nuovi Saggi*, p. 150; cf. *Problemi*, p. 127. [41]*Problemi*, p. 44. [42]*Ariosto, Shakespeare and Corneille*, p. 290.

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ENGLISH TRADITION AND IDIOM

'HULLO, here's a bit of long-meadow oak,' exclaimed one of the men who were helping to lay down the stage for our local play. That plank alone happened not to be of oak—but of poplar. His remark was a riddle to which all present held the clue (a favourite conversational method). It implied an intimate knowledge of local geography among his hearers. The interpretation is this. The immediate neighbourhood consists of arable land undulating in low ridges. Along each depression runs a brook taking the water from the fields, and along either side of these brooks lies almost the only pasturage in the district—a double chain of long narrow meadows. Oak trees are not characteristic of these long meadows, but poplars. Thus 'long-meadow oak' equals poplar. This is a random example of how closely the countryman's life and language run together; they are like flesh and bone. He only speaks when he feels, and feeling and humour choose always an expression which is a picture of life before the bare word. (Thus too, one who 'looks as though she's been a-stone-picking all her life' for 'a bent old woman'). The invention and multiplication of such phrases is never-ending and can be guaranteed for the illiterate mind as long as one day differs from another. The one straight line in the landscape is the plough's furrow, obtained only with mental and muscular preoccupation. Even then (as standards of precision go) it is only the roughest optical generalization, as it were, of straightness. Thus it is that agriculture and its tradition have resisted so stubbornly the age of the formula. Like an ash-pole hammered into the clay for a fence, it still buds.

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In a sense the soil has been 'rationalized' for centuries, but the bird that alights on it, the storm-cloud that impends, are as incalculable as ever. It is the infinite variation of extraneous circumstance, the guerrilla multitude of wild life that man still only holds at bay, that is the genius alive in country tradition. This genius now has its own battle to fight with modern 'awareness,' for possession of the countryman's soul.

To be employed in agriculture is like living in the shadow of a tidal wave. Rural 'timelessness' is an urban illusion—time flies swifter to the farmer than to anyone. There is always urgency, only the *tempo* of the life is so different, that to the modern citizen the countryman's haste seems like leisure, and his phrases 'poetical.' Demagogy has taken the latter ready-made and exploited them. Platform politicians who have never wielded anything heavier than their own fists are always putting their hands to the plough, sowing and reaping and threshing and winnowing. Cartoonists picture agriculture for their parables. Divorced from the earth-life, the traditional processes thus become clichés and mental symbols merely.

To understand how language is still reborn out of tradition in the unlettered mind (I refer to the older men), it is necessary to be immersed in the life till one *thinks* as well as talks, in local usage. A thousand natural chances of the day come to provide jest, illustration, simile. It is something even to find oneself at liberty (talking to the countryman) to use the emphatic 'that do' for our correct 'it does'; to say 'for everlasting of' instead of 'a great many.' This, possibly, is why rural speech is 'picturesque.' The countryman kindles as he speaks, assumes the authority of one rooted in his life, and that emotional quickening is the same in essence as the artist's—creative. In the glow of it he coins words. Linguistically there is a kind of half-light in his brain, and on the impulse of an emotion words get confused with one another and fused into something new—a new shade of meaning is expressed. 'I'm squaggled' or 'that squaggle me' (of a too-tight collar or a too-thick coat in hot weather). 'A spuffling sort of chap' is one who boasts and bustles about importantly. To be 'strandled' is to be both baffled and stranded. 'Rafty' is both raw and misty. These, I say, are not traditional words, but words born of momentary need out of tradition.

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Traditional idiom is founded on the Bible, that having been (luckily) the one book read in farm and cottage for centuries. 'And she went and came and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging to Boaz . . . .' might have been spoken by any old countryman to-day. Thus to one whom I had passed in a car some way from home, I said 'I saw you at —— yesterday,' and he replied, 'Yes, master, and I *had knowledge* of you.'

There is an associative naïveté in the application of words which is another reason for the freshness achieved by a limited vocabulary. A single illustration will serve. The same old man had been staying away from home, and it had been windy March weather. 'I had to get back,' he said, 'for I knew my mills would all be down.' This puzzled me for a minute, knowing that he was no miller, but a cottager, and knowing of only one mill in the parish, and that derelict. But when he added, 'And when I got home I found for everlasting of birds about the garden,' I realized he meant the revolving bird-scarers he had made, with four feathers for sails.

The countryman's speech is only roundabout to that superficial view which regards a poem as going a long way round to say what could be conveyed in a few words. Sustainedly, the emotional and muscular content of his idiom is almost equal to that of poetry, for he possesses that same instinct by which the poet places words in striking propinquity; the urgency of his feeling causing his mind to leap intermediate associations, coining many a 'quaint' phrase, imaginatively just, though superficially bizarre. Local idiom is actually terse, inventing ellipses of its own. 'They won't come to-day—DO (= but if they should) it won't be till late.' Water pours out of a pipe 'full-hole.' Another local peculiarity is the transposition of a physical sensation to the thing that causes it. A gardener will say that the smell of a hyacinth or lilac is 'faint,' meaning, not that it is slight, but so pungent as to make him feel faint.

Comparatively, the illiterate man has few words; language is new to him; but a power within him insists on getting said what he has to say. He has to wrestle with his angel. He must feel the word almost physically, it must be born alive out of his lips. His metaphors are like flashes of lightning. 'Dark as iron.' He doesn't

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care a jot for grammar, but only that what needs must be said, gets said somehow. Words as such don't matter to him. He enjoys and uses quite ruthlessly his freedom from class or academic restrictions. 'Not a mucher' (not much good); 'Lessest' (least); 'Snew' (snowed). Pronunciation is altered to suit his convenience: 'Ellum' (elm); 'Flim' (film); 'Meece' (mice). His need is for emphasis, for his surroundings are his perpetual wonder. Fires, floods, freezings—spring in winter—winter in summer—there is always something prodigious to be told of. The dark source is very present to him just beyond the screen of visible phenomena. Nature is to him always a masked face. The mask changes; it is grim or gay, but the face behind it is always unseen. His very phrase 'in good heart' senses the being latent in the soil. And he has an infinite sensibility of the moods of the weather. His rain vocabulary alone is considerable; it may be merely 'smeary,' or again 'a tidy mizzle,' or 'rain pourin',' or 'heavens hard.'

What is the outlook to-day? We have been standing a long time making up our minds to ford a river. Some started, others followed, and now that most are well in, it is found to be deeper and more difficult than was at first realized. 'Just a little learning—just a little acquisition of knowledge,' we said, 'and look, we shall be across and standing at the gates of the celestial city.' But now, finding ourselves in difficulties, we cry out to those still on the bank, 'Don't attempt it—you are much better off where you are.' Too late. We are all for it now. The country fathers are the only relics of that illiterate class which (finding it almost extinct) we realize now has ever been the source and renewal of our literature. The educated person, if he comes in contact with an old man who can neither read nor write, although his surface-mind feels superior, feels in his heart an involuntary respect, sensing that the old man has in his own personal way a knowledge and understanding somehow outside his own. If he can get that old man to 'talk' he rejoices in having touched life at a fresh aspect. Isn't it a boast among 'intelligent' people that you got such and such an old country fellow to 'talk'? He is one of those who had that ruthless-faery way with the educated man's own terms, humanizing his 'polyanthus' into Polly Ann. Only the other day I heard one referring to a hard-drinking man as being afflicted with 'delirious trembles.'

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The young men have no such whimsies. The first taste of education and standard English has had the effect of making them acutely self-conscious. They realize (and agricultural depression helps in this) not that they stand supreme in a fundamental way of life, but that they are the last left on a sinking ship. No one decries civilization who has not experienced it *ad nauseam*. Modernity offers dim but infinite possibilities to the young countryman if only he can rid his boots of this impeding clay. Pylons, petrol pumps and other 'defacements' are to him symbols of a noble power. The motor-bus, motor-bicycle, wireless, are that power's beckonings. But he is late, he is held hapless in a ruining countryside, everyone else is laughing at him he feels ; at his heavy boots, his rough ways. Doesn't the daily paper laugh at him, and the magazine? Look at the 'comic' country articles, the illustrated jokes. The old men had their defence. They knew what they knew. But he can't stay where they are. The contentment of it is gone. Naturally he seizes on the most obvious and spurious symbols of culture first ; he wants to wear low shoes and get a job behind a counter.

Not but that, even to-day, with all the clichés of popular journalism, language just breathes of itself. We invest our machines with personalities. There are words such as 'wangle,' 'stunt,' coined by the times to express new shades of meaning, and old meanings resuscitated, such as 'stall' in regard to the aeroplane. But England still compromises between old and new, choking the old source language, yet hanging on to clichés long unrelated to current life. We must go to America for a modern counterpart of the old idiomatic vigour of common speech. American slang may be ugly and unpleasant, but it has the fascination of abounding vitality, hectic and spurious though that may be. It presupposes knowledge of a thousand sophistications, of intimacy with the life of a modern city, just as the traditional idiom presupposed a familiarity with nature and the processes of agriculture. But no urban idiom, however ingenious, could ever be regarded as compensating for that founded on the traditional order. It must always be sharp, cerebrated and opportunist. It is an excitement that feeds on itself, having no root in fundamentals.

In place of abstract knowledge, the illiterate countryman has a genius, an intuitive and associative consciousness similar to that

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of the child. At the other end of the scale, the poet (in the widest sense of the word), as an example of high culture, is nearer the illiterate labourer than all the grades that go between. Culture moves slowly, but in a circle. But modern conditions have put their spoke in the wheel. Elementary education's first effect is to supersede that genius. That sense of abundant satisfaction in *being*, dies from our words. They are robots, purely functional ; we consciously make them out of bits of Latin and Greek. They serve their one purpose, and suggest nothing. The mass of acquired facts, imposed technicalities, cultural summaries, make a flutter on the pool whose dark depth was our primitive genius. We are all surface to-day ; all being talked to like children in school by the few technical masters, or bawled at by industrial and newspaper magnates attempting a psychological tyranny.

' Back to earth ' is a trite enough phrase ; but the implications of it in the sense of a return, somewhere in the social scale, to a faith in intuitive values, are no such simple matter.

ADRIAN BELL.

NOTE.—It had been intended to accompany Mr. Bell's article with a note by F. R. Leavis on the latest phase of James Joyce, but this has had to be held over for lack of room.

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THE FRENCH NOVEL OF TO-DAY

SHOULD anybody ask me: 'What are the five significant English novelists of to-day?' I could readily draw up a list which might, I believe, stand as a basis for serious discussion. Not so for the French novel. I am sorry to say the question would embarrass me. A large number of names would first offer themselves as equally representative. Then, after maturer consideration, they would become equally slippery between our hands, and we should be at a loss which to retain and to brandish. My friend, Mr. F. R. Leavis, once remarked to me: 'You have in France quite a galaxy of brilliant critics, writing intelligently and pointedly, much more than we have in this country, but they all seem to lack something.' Yes, somehow, they all seem to lack something. The reason, for aught I know, is this: There are, in France, a great number of intelligent and cultured people, whose intellectual formation has been much about the same, and who have developed some sort of critical mind, the methods of *explication littéraire* in our secondary schools being responsible. Anybody, with an alert intellect, can discover whether such a play is well balanced, whether the expression is well adapted to the thought, and the like. Anybody who has received the literary training of our *lycées*, can write an article on a book, clear and pertinent. And indeed, they do. The tradition of the *composition française* is followed up to man's estate and never relinquished. So much so, that a good many novels—happily not all—look like clever schoolboys' tasks, into which the writer has put, sedately and composedly, the experience of his later life, without ever forgetting the rules of good composition and good writing.

That is why we have so many indifferent novels which, at first sight, might lead you into the belief they are great. You have nothing to say against them. There is no hitch, no flaw, to stop you and awaken your suspicion. You have style, equilibrium between the parts, psychology, ideas, and even a moral: in short, all the requisites of a good story. But then, somehow, it

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is not *it*. The book has played you false. Not because you have soon forgotten it (indeed, some passages or characters may have struck you beyond oblivion) but because, as a whole, it fades into the general indistinctness of the surrounding novels. Such are, for example, the 'great' novels of M. André Maurois; such, the majority of the books crowned by the Académie Goncourt, not to speak of the Académie Française. They lack intensity, they lack that convincing something which is the essential character of the novels, say, of D. H. Lawrence or, to a lesser degree, of Virginia Woolf.

Of course, I do not mean our novelists have no individuality. We shall soon see they have. We shall even see they cannot, any more than anywhere else, escape it. But their main preoccupation seems to be to use it as a means to write a *good* book. They want to make the best of their gifts. In fact, they are men of letters to the core. Once they have established themselves in some sort of position, once they have chosen their ground (and often an academic prize or a popular success has to do it for them) they stand unshaken, choking their personality as it were to an unconscious exploitation of their abilities. The public they work for is uncommonly wide and aware; it is the sort of public which expects the sort of thing they do, being, in fact, made of the same mental paste. (Add to this that the female part of this public tends more and more, because of a parallel upbringing, to become indistinguishable from the male part). Broadly speaking, any reader of novels is a prospective novelist, or a would-be novelist. That accounts for the fact that the writer takes so much pains to satisfy the ever-present love of his audience for a sound workmanship. The mainspring of his inspiration is more rational than emotive. He never forgets he will be judged by his peers, if not by his betters. He will tame his imagination or his native savageness, if born with any, into meek obedience to a set of well-established rules, the authority of which it never occurred to him he could challenge without incurring the greatest dangers for his art.

If he challenges anything, it is to take an intellectual or moral position of his own, as much as saying: thus should things be or not be, in life; such is the world as I see it; but never or very rarely: thus should a novel be written, thus characters

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should be described. One remembers the failure with the public of M. André Gide's only claim to the novel,[1] and the uproar of protest which received M. Ramuz's declarations (though, it is true, M. Ramuz is a Swiss). Hence, the external uniformity of our best novels. Hence, too, the astonishing number of schools which profess intellectual independence, whose doctrines and even achievements may bring the illusion of a vivid diversity. But I really doubt whether we could find anybody whose temperamental expression could exist nowhere outside the novel as it stands—a novelist in the way Balzac, for instance, or Fielding, were novelists.

However, the diversity of which I speak bears witness to the abiding concern of the French novelist to have his own standpoint. He would willingly be the chief of a school, if possible of a new school. But there, the difficulty is great, and all the exertions of the hopeful writer end in finding a new name for an old thing. Thus, the *populistes, impressionnistes, paysans,* and so on, could be traced back to a comparatively near past. Those labels should not delude us. They really matter very little for the critic. It is very convenient, but rather illusive, to classify. Of course, Marcel Proust belongs to the psychological school, and Pierre Benoit to the novel of adventure (though I beg to be excused for the collocation). But there is more in Proust than psychology, and far less in Pierre Benoit than adventure. If we want to grasp the really new, the really significant in the French novel of to-day, we ought to dig far deeper than publishers' advertisements.

A few remarks, then, should be made. Since the war, all novelists, whatever the school which they pretend to belong to may be, have attempted in different ways a renovation of their art. I say 'have attempted,' but it would be more correct to add that most of them have done it unconsciously, following rather a kind of ill-defined tendency, and receiving influences they were not always aware of. The frame of the pre-war novel was somehow felt to be narrow; the *roman d'analyse* or the *roman à thèse* appeared childish or mean in their preoccupations. The tone, then, was insufferable, and the style artificial, insipid, jejune. Anatole France and Paul Bourget have not escaped their fate. Then, the younger writers had passed through the wild experience of the

[1] *Les Faux Monnayeurs,* which M. Gide calls: *Mon premier roman.*

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War. It helped them to realize a lot of things, and, among them, the value of life and the right of life to assume whatever form it may peradventure come upon. That did not lead to a sullen admiration for monsters, but I believe it did much towards a deeper respect for human personality. I believe it brought about a new consideration for Dostoievsky, whom it was nearly impossible for the man of 1910 to understand. Romantic sentimentalism was driven out of the way, and self-contemplation rejected the moral issues of a fruitless and meaningless idealism.

But this was not enough. In proportion as human personality offered its infinitely varied scopes, the novelist saw his field of research widen more and more. A new kind of exoticism came to light, which was not a function of the climate or the distance. The inhabitant of the suburbs of Paris, or the peasant of the Basses Alpes, was seen to be as strange and as interesting a model as the remote Chinese. Indeed, it was as if they had never been known. The matter was, not to build up an atmosphere, but deliver things as they were. Enough of well-intended trumpery, of noble make-up, of naïve ignorance. The discredit into which Mistral has fallen (he is, in fact, a novelist in verse) illustrates the victory of a new psychological and material realism.

Thus, from all points of the literary horizon, writers concentrated more closely upon reality. It was as if new secrets ought to be drawn from it, which would solve the ever-increasing complexity of life. So complex indeed, that one could not always help being sorely perplexed as to what was real and what not. The frontiers between the possible and the true began to oscillate, what with the new land discovered by freudian analysis, what with the strange light which beamed down from the disrupted dreams of a fiercely sincere youth, or the novel wonder which was contained in the marvellous slaving down of external matter. Poetry, once more, returned to the novel, but not in terms of a high-strung rhetoric, or inconsistent imagery, or hectic yearnings towards a non-terrestrial dream-land, but in truly human terms; the writer, that is, no longer attempted to impose upon his readers, he was no more a dupe himself of his wishes or of his hopes, but he kept cool and intensely aware. A kind of cold and self-possessed pessimism was thus evolved, which is perceptible in nearly all the contemporary novel, however brilliant and detached it may look

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on the surface. The whole work of Paul Morand could be here legitimately quoted.

It followed, naturally enough, that the means of expression had to be altered. The old noble and self-important forms of style had crumbled away, as improper to the new mental attitude. The sentence was split, or lengthened out, without any respect for the laws of grammar (not, of course, without much grumbling from the steady traditionalists of the famous *clarté française*). Yet, the material reform is elsewhere. The syntax cannot be, in French, contorted without much damage to the verisimilitude of the expression ; nor can the vocabulary be increased to a large extent. The novelty lay, as ever, in creating new ties between old words, but expressive of the new poetical conception of the world. The metaphor underwent a thorough transformation, now establishing a reversed relationship (translating the living in terms of the inanimate for instance, but an inanimate fabricated by man), now borrowing a minute detail to focus the whole of the reality of the object upon it, now again associating things intrinsically dissimilar. A strange pantheism danced and flickered around us from the works of Jean Giraudoux even to those of Jean Giono.

One might have feared that such a radical transformation of the elements of the novel might lead to its disintegration. Yet it is not so. I even believe that, apart from the contribution a very strong personality might have brought, the novel was doomed to a fruitless repetition of the past. But now, as it is, the diverse boughs of the tree are coming out with a new crop, of which it is, of course, difficult to say which sections will wither first. The novel of adventure, in spite of Pierre Benoit, already quoted, Francis Carco, Pierre Mac Orlan, does not seem to have reached the high pitch at which the English novelists have raised it. Even the marvellous success of Alain Fournier's *Le Grand Meaulnes* has not been renewed. I would, however, point to *Les Enfants Terribles* of Jean Cocteau as the nearest approach to that kind of wonder. But there is more of a bewitching psychological magic than what is generally understood by the name of adventure. Again, the novels of André Malraux (*Les Conquérants, La Condition Humaine*), though they are cramful with action, lay the stress on the mental evolution of their heroes, who are almost

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independent of the action they are engaged in. As a rule, the French novelist is bound to centre the interest upon the unfolding of a character, and the external events merely help the process. We must therefore try elsewhere if we want to find the field where he is most likely to succeed best.

I am not going to exhaust, *genre* after *genre*, all the contemporary production. A few representative men will suffice to my purpose which was more to give an idea of the general situation than to examine each particular case. I beg to be excused for inevitable omissions. Jean Giraudoux, to begin with, is perhaps the only novelist who has kept a consistently optimistic view of life. He owes his untiringly boyish (some would say girlish) spirits to the fact that he takes the universe, human beings, nature, and all the paraphernalia of life, as an inexhaustible source of delightful sensations. He converts everything into poetical material, or, rather, he is able to find the exquisite in the meanest objects. This deliberate will to ignore the rest has become a habit which his imitators have turned into a *poncif*: thus a modern preciosity has appeared, carried by Joseph Delteil to a bullying paganism, which is more tiresome than efficient. Giraudoux, however, has now begun a career as dramatist which promises to be successful and to finish him as a novelist. Paul Morand, also termed as one of his disciples, is the keenest chronicler of modernism, whose double-edged humour delights in showing off the futility of the perfection and external brilliancy of a mechanical civilization which leaves the soul as wretched as before. He is not free of a kind of morose nostalgia for the bygone times of his youth, even when he is the fiercest upon the ridiculous aspects of the past. He is getting old, though he remains by far the cleverest journalist we have ever had, as his books on *New York* and *London* bear witness.

It may seem gratuitous to mention Jean Giono next to Giraudoux. Yet, they have in common this abnormal vision of things which conjures up a poetical universe. Their preciosity is, at bottom, much the same. Only, with Giono, who is a peasant by birth and by taste, it is applied to a rustic world whose secrets he intuitively penetrates. That brings him to a sacred horror of the town which culminates in his sincere faith in a vast and powerful pantheism beneficent to the man who is happy enough to keep open the door of its multifarious mysteries. Moreover, he is direct

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and healthy; his characters are simple and even primitive; he is a born story-teller and will, provided he does not let himself be crushed by his present popularity, do still better. I consider him as one of the most gifted writers of the present times.

The few novelists which I have now to mention rapidly do not pride themselves on having invented or used a new style. So far, they remain in the tradition of good writing. Maurois, Duhamel, Mauriac, R. Martin du Gard, Jules Romains, Marcel Arland (they might be astonished at finding themselves in the same batch) are similarly intent upon explaining human conduct, whether the object considered be a single character, a family, or a still larger group of people. This, indeed, has always been the true aim of the novelist, particularly of the French novelist. Slow and patient psychological investigation, to account for oddnesses, refusals before life, crimes, suicides, whatever inclination or passion gives a man his own unique bias. It may be the sentimental conflicts of two bourgeois souls, the always baffled attempts of a vulgar clerk (Salavin) at heroism and sanctity; it may be the lurking devils of greed or lust or hatred haunting the abodes of the provincial upper classes and fighting against the angels of charity and purity; it may be the parallel growth and differentiation of two young brothers, studied through the course of many years; it may be, still more ambitiously, an attempt to seize in all its details the enormous body and soul of a whole town, both in time and space—there is ample field to cover, and, parodying Dickens's expression, one may say that the French novelists 'are brewing on a large scale.'

It seems that, on the whole, we have a right to consider hopefully such a state of things. The avidity of the public to read anything at any cost (as it was after the War) has considerably abated. Editors are more careful in the choice of their *poulains*. Academic prizes do no longer sell like wildfire. Writers themselves wisely restrain their production. One or two books only which count are yearly printed, and, to conclude on a quite actual note, I will mention the last popular success which is, as it happens sometimes in France, a great book. *Le Voyage au Bout de la Nuit*, of Louis Ferdinand Céline, must have sent pale with envy all the dainty 'populists' who prefer being decently flat to touching muck. Céline vigorously sets aside all daintiness. He gives a view

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of man and society which is not flattering. But his indignation itself is a sufficient proof of his nobleness, since it can be expressed in the convincing work of art he has honoured us with.

HENRI FLUCHERE.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Though I am not in a position to award prizes or advise irrefutably about what should be read and what not, I offer a tentative list of novels representative of the different tendencies hinted at in the foregoing essay. Neither Proust nor Gide is mentioned, for reasons easy to understand. Alain Fournier and M. Valéry Larbaud are mentioned as forerunners.

Alain Fournier: *Le Grand Meaulnes.*
Valéry Larbaud: *Barnabooth; Beauté mon beau souci.*
Jean Cocteau: *Les Enfants Terribles.*
P. Mac Orlan: *A bord de l'Etoile Matutine.*
A. Malraux: *Les Conquérants; La Condition Humaine.*
Jean Giraudoux: *Simon le Pathétique; Siegfried et le Limousin; Bella; Suzanne et le Pacifique.*
Paul Morand: *Ouvert la Nuit; Fermé la Nuit; Champions du Monde.*
Marcel Jouhandeau: *M. Godeau intime; Le Parricide imaginaire.*
Jules Supervielle: *Le Voleur d'Enfants.*
Jean Giono: *Colline; Un de Baumugnes; Regain; Le Grand Troupeau; Jean le Bleu.*
André Chamson: *Le Crime des Justes.*
Georges Bernanos: *Sous le Soleil de Satan.*
André Maurois: *Climats; Le Cercle de Famille.*
Marcel Arland: *L'Ordre.*
Georges Duhamel: *La Confession de Minuit; Le Journal de Salavin* (The Salavin 'saga' has five volumes).
François Mauriac: *Le Baiser au Lépreux; Le Désert de l'Amour; Thérèse Desqueyroux; Le Noeud de vipères; Le Mystère Frontenac.*
R. Martin du Gard: *Les Thibault* (7 vols. published).
Jules Romains: *Les Hommes de bonne volonté* (4 vols. published).

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'HERO AND LEANDER'

MARLOWE'S *Hero and Leander* has not received scrutiny in proportion to the frequent and almost unqualified adulation which has been bestowed on it. In particular, the tone, the poet's attitude to his subject, has not been considered at all. The glowing final lines of the Second Sestiad have overwhelmed the critics: the earlier part is neglected, or dismissed as tapestry-weaving in the familiar *Venus and Adonis* manner.

Yet it should be obvious that *Hero and Leander* is in Marlowe's maturest style (though even that has been questioned)[1] and that in 1593 he was not likely to practise the naïveté of a *Scillaes Metamorphosis* or an *Endimion and Phœbe*. His tendency at this period was towards distortion (or 'farce')[2] and though, in *The Jew of Malta*, his material was crude and simplified, this implies a corresponding subtlety and power in its selection and arrangement.

If this tendency towards distortion or caricature in the handling of already simplified (because stock) material is remembered, these lines, which follow the elaborate description of Hero's appearance may appear in a new light:

> So lovely fair was Hero, Venus' nun,
> As Nature wept, thinking she was undone,
> Because she took more from her than she kept,
> And of such wondrous beauty her bereft;
> Therefore, in sign her treasure suffered wrack,
> Since Hero's time hath half the world been black.
> *First Sestiad*, ll 45ff.

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[1]*Vide* L. C. Martin, Introduction to the *Poems*, p. 3. [2]T. S. Eliot, 'Notes on the Blank Verse of Christopher Marlowe,' *The Sacred Wood*.

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The first conceit is a familiar one: but the accent is not familiar: and that last hyperbole, with its brisk rhyme, clinches the impression of an attitude not mock-heroic (the term is too definite) but quite detached and even faintly amused. A little later, the effect of Hero's beauty on the general population of Sestos is described:

> So ran the people forth to gaze upon her:
> And all that saw her were enamour'd on her:
> And as in fury of a dreadful fight,
> Their fellows being slain or put to flight,
> Poor soldiers stand with fear of death dead-strooken,
> So at her presence all surprised and tooken,
> Await the sentence of her scornful eyes;
> He whom she favours lives; the other dies.
> There might you see one sigh, another rage,
> And some, their violent passions to assuage,
> Compile sharp satires: but alas, too late. . . .
>
> *First Sestiad,* ll 117ff.

The movement of the last four lines, the mock desperation of those pauses after the third foot, and the cheerful air with which the whole passage sums up the fate of the lovers caps the jaunty double rhymes: the description is clearly in a vein of delicate mockery, spoken as it were with eyebrows raised. Yet the simile of the poor soldiers is straightforwardly passionate, and saves the feelings from any danger of frivolity, reversing the usual decorative and expansive function of the simile in Marlowe.

The description of the gods' sports as painted on the wall of the temple, has the same deliberate over-exuberance as the first passage:

> Jove . . . for his love Europa bellowing loud,
> And tumbling with the Rainbow in a cloud.
>
> *First Sestiad,* ll 148-9.

The splendid 'periphrasis of night' which follows has a simple and straightforward power: for this caricature is not belittling, nor is the degree of distortion constant. It is the variations from one level of detachment to another that give the poem its extraordinary air of maturity and poise. And it is Marlowe's own assent to the irresistibility of love which prompts

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the ruthlessness to Hero's lovers, to Hero herself, bombarded by the sophistries of Leander: the key to the attitude is the passage which Shakespeare quoted:

> It lies not in our power to love or hate,
> For will in us is over-ruled by fate. . . .
> When both deliberate, the love is slight,
> Whoever lov'd that lov'd not at first sight?
> *First Sestiad,* ll 167-8, 175-6.

and later,

> Love is not full of pity as men say,
> But deaf and cruel when he means to prey.
> *Second Sestiad,* ll 287-8.

Hero's prayers are beaten down with relish by Marlowe as well as by Cupid: here he triumphantly identifies himself with the gods against the mortals. The deliberate caricature of that passage can hardly be contested:

> Her vows about the empty air he flings,
> All deep enrag'd, his sinewy bow he bent,
> And shot a shaft that burning from him went.
> *First Sestiad,* ll 370ff.

The story of the Destinies' love for Cupid is a burlesque illustration of the same theme, not a digression. It is exhilarating to see the beautiful pair of lovers so hopelessly entangled: it is farcical to see the toothless Destines doting on Cupid and with characteristic Marlovian violence, reversing the order of the world for his sake. They serve exactly the same purpose as the old Nurse in *Dido, Queen of Carthage,* who is bewitched and acts as a parody of the Queen. The parallels between *Dido* and *Hero and Leander* have not, I think, been sufficiently stressed: besides that of the theme, Marlowe's attitude of adult detachment coupled with direct passion is the same in both the works. It cannot be doubted that the scene between the Nurse and Cupid[1] with its ripe luxuriance of description belongs to the same period as the poem. The prologue to *Dido,* the scene between Jove and

[1]Act IV, scene V. There is one line in common between *Dido* and *Hero and Leander* (*Dido,* 2, 1, 231, and *Hero,* 1, 382).

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Ganymede, has a parallel in the episode of Leander and Neptune in the Second Sestiad.

The self-deceptions, the half serious efforts to escape which Hero makes are obvious comedy. Her slyness in 'coming somewhat nigh' Leander, her 'Come hither,' (which invitation slips out 'unawares'), her final attempt to 'train' him by dropping her fan as she goes, which he with unpardonable clumsiness, ignores, are not the coquetries of a Cressida but the delicacies of a Criseyde. It is in fact with Chaucer's heroine that one compares her again and again: and the end of the Second Sestiad forms a remarkable parallel to *Troilus and Criseyde*, Book III, stanzas 156-179.

> Treason was in her thought,
> And cunningly to yield herself she sought.
> Seeming not won, yet was she won at length,
> In such wars women use but half their strength.
> *Second Sestiad*, ll 293ff.

> This Troilus in armes gan hir streyne,
> And seyde 'O sweet, as even mote I goon,
> Now be ye caught, now is there but we tweyne,
> Now yeldeth yow, for other boot is noon.'
> To that Criseyde answered this anoon,
> 'Ne hadde I er now, my swete herte deere,
> Ben yolde, iwis, I were not now here.'
> Book III., st. 173.

Chaucer's exultancy is very similar to Marlowe's: it comes directly in the joy with which he packs the household off to bed:

> There was no more skippen nor to daunce,
> But boden go to bedde with mischaunce,
> If any wight was stirring anywhere,
> And let hem slepe that a-bedde were.
> Book III., st. 99.

or in the 'sheer song of ironical happiness'[1] of stanza 152.

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[1]Empson *Seven Types of Ambiguity*, p. 86. His remarks are very pertinent to this question.

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The attitude to Hero is one of exultant ruthlessness: the attitude to Leander varies. Sometimes he is the 'sharp bold sophister' and then the fun lies in the pomposity of his pleas. Sometimes he is the complete innocent (as in the incident of the fan) and then the subdued laugh of a double rhyme goes against him.

> Leander rude in love and raw
> Long dallying with Hero, nothing saw
> That might delight him more, yet he suspected
> Some amorous rites or other were neglected.
> *Second Sestiad*, ll 60ff.

Finally a great many of the 'sentences' which complete a couplet as if with a little aside from the author, show the same mixtures of irony and exuberance. Especially those which sum up and dismiss in a sophisticated manner the feminine point of view.

> Hero's looks yielded but her words made war,
> Women are won when they begin to jar.
> *First Sestiad*, ll 331-2.

> Ne'er king sought more to keep his diadem
> Than Hero this inestimable gem. . .
> Jewels being lost are found again, this never;
> 'Tis lost but once and once lost lost for ever.
> *Second Sestiad*, ll 78-9, 85-6.

> Seeming not won, yet was she won at length,
> In such wars women use but half their strength.
> *Second Sestiad*, ll 295-6.

And those delightful lines,

> Seeing a naked man, she screech'd for fear
> Such sights as this to tender maids are rare.
> *Second Sestiad*, ll 237-8.

The general attitude is nearer to Chaucer's than that of Keats in *St. Agnes' Eve* or even Shakespeare in *Venus and Adonis*. Marlowe is both ironically detached and sympathetically identified with the lovers: and this is not an unlikely point of view for the satirical wit that the few records suggest him to have been. He appears of a

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sensuous and passionate temper, but detached in his attitude towards other people. He enjoyed the discomfiture of his friends, whether he produced it by unpleasant practical jokes ('sudden privie injuries') or by blasphemies about the role of the Angel Gabriel in the Annunciation, and Kyd thought 'he was of a cruel heart.' At all events he seems more Mercutio than Romeo (and it is rather surprising that none of the more biographically-minded of the Shakespearian critics has yet made the equation).

How far such an attitude could have produced any satisfactory end to the story is uncertain. Chaucer found a straightforward tragedy impossible in *Troilus and Criseyde*: but his methods of evasion were not open to Marlowe, particularly as the later poem is on so much smaller a scale. *Dido* ends magnificently, but the comedy at the beginning is not so important as in *Hero and Leander*. The greater success of the poem may be defined in the greater complexity of the feelings behind it, the surer poise: so that perhaps to doubt the possibility of a suitable ending is to under-estimated Marlowe's powers.

M. C. BRADBROOK.

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COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

'THIS POETICAL RENASCENCE'

NEW VERSE, Nos. 1 and 2.
POETRY, A MAGAZINE OF VERSE. Edited by Harriet Monroe.
NEW SIGNATURES. Collected by Michael Roberts (Hogarth Press, 3/6d.).
NEW COUNTRY. Edited by Michael Roberts (Hogarth Press, 7/6d.).
THE MAGNETIC MOUNTAIN, by C. Day Lewis (Hogarth Press, 3/6d.).
POEMS, by Stephen Spender (Faber and Faber, 5/-).
FLOWERING REEDS, by Roy Campbell (Boriswood, 5/-).
THE EATEN HEART, by Richard Aldington (Chatto and Windus, 3/6d.).
FAUST'S METAMORPHOSES, by George Reavey (The New Review Editions).
TRANSIT OF VENUS, by Harry Crosby. With a Preface by T. S. Eliot.
TORCHBEARER, by Harry Crosby. With Notes by Ezra Pound.
CHARIOT OF THE SUN, by Harry Crosby. Introduction by D. H. Lawrence.
SLEEPING TOGETHER, by Harry Crosby. With a Memory of the Poet by Stuart Gilbert. (The Black Sun Press, Rue Cardinale, Paris).

America, in Harriet Monroe's *Poetry*, has long had a magazine devoted to verse. Persistence over twenty years is in a way impressive, thought just what it signifies is, perhaps, not easily summed up. *Poetry* quotes on its back cover from Whitman:

> To have great poets
> there must be great audiences too.

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At any rate, if there were no audience at all we couldn't expect to have many poets, and, moreover, there would in any case be little point in having them. The intention, so admirably persisted in, that founded *Poetry* was that poets should be assured of an audience; and there can be no doubt that by printing the early work of poets who have since achieved distinction, *Poetry* did help them to develop. But it must be asked, in what sense is there to-day a public for verse? Is there more a public now than there was twenty years ago?

It will be well, not to be invidious, to turn at this point nearer home. *New Verse* is to be welcomed, and commended for support, as undertaking on this side of the Atlantic a like office to that of the American magazine. (4a Keats Grove, London, N.W.3. Annual subscription 3/3d. or 80 cents post free. Single numbers 6d.). One is glad to read in the second number that 'the first number of *New Verse* has sold well, and validates trust that both need and public for it exist.' Nevertheless, it must be said, with reference to the questions just asked, that *New Verse* points to the same answer as *Poetry*. And, to be quite uninvidious, so does all the recent evidence that journalists speaking of the growing public for poetry would adduce. *Poetry, New Verse, New Signatures, New Country,* the *Hogarth Living Poets,* and one might add, to maintain the international balance, the verse pages of the *Symposium* and the *Hound and Horn*—journals specified because of their intelligence—all go to show that there is not in any serious sense a public for poetry. A real public for poetry would be a public in some degree educated about poetry, and capable of appreciating and checking critically the editorial standards; a public embodying a certain collective experience, intelligence and taste. The good editorial critic would be the representative of the highest level of such a public (most present to him, probably, in the form of an immediate milieu of critical exchange and discussion). Where there is no such public the critic is without the means to education he has a right to and without the necessary conditions of functioning. And if one says that the contents of the publications referred to make it impossible to believe that such a public exists, that is not to disparage insultingly those editorially responsible.

To make a start where everything has to be done from the

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beginning, to assemble the nucleus of an actively and intelligently responsive public, and to form in commerce with it the common critical sensibility that every individual critic assumes, and has to assume if he is to be a critic at all, is a desperately difficult business. It might be said that *New Verse, New Signatures* and the associated publications (for though *New Verse* is independent in editorship and intention it clearly depends upon the same general response as the others) do at any rate represent a notably determined and promising effort at a start. The reception they have had—there has been a general readiness to hail achievement, to see a new phase of English poetry as actually here—certainly evidences a fairly widely shared sense that to have a poetry that should be a significant part of contemporary life is desirable. Both this sense and the accompanying readiness are representatively expressed in Mr. Michael Roberts's prefaces to *New Signatures* and *New Country*. The complete discrepancy between the preface (richly illustrative of the procreant wish) and the following contents, between sales-talk and goods, make the earlier book, which came out last year, especially interesting.

It was, to begin with, a striking enough achievement to see any community among so heterogeneous an array of versifiers. But Mr. Roberts is capable, in offering his book as representing ' a clear reaction against esoteric poetry in which it is necessary for the reader to catch each recondite allusion,' of picking on Mr. Empson as exemplary, and finding his poems ' important because they do something to remove the difficulties which have stood between the poet and the writing of popular poetry.' Mr. Empson, as a matter of fact, is at least as recondite and difficult here as he has ever been, and several of the poems leave one wondering whether the difficulty is worth wrestling with. The uneasiness that qualified the interest one took in Mr. Empson's work long before he became a New Signature is settling into sad recognition that he is becoming less and less likely to develop. He seems no nearer than before to finding a more radical incitement to the writing of poetry (or of criticism) than pleasure in a strenuous intellectual game. He is very intelligent indeed, but he is an odd recruit for the company of the devoted who, whatever they may lack as poets, at least have, or lay claim to, the qualification that I agree with Mr. Roberts in thinking essential if we are to hope for a

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'poetical renascence'—moral seriousness, or moral passion (for the tone of Mr. Roberts's prefaces comports with the stronger phrase).

'The technical achievement of these poets is notable' runs the preface to *New Signatures*: of Mr. Empson alone is it true. (Unless one excepts also Mr. Eberhart, an American poet who appears to be included merely because he figured in *Cambridge Poetry, 1929*. Though he is the antithesis of Mr. Empson in being a poet of naïve emotion and intuition, he will, because of his intensely individualist sensibility and expression, be found by most readers almost as obscure and 'esoteric,' and not even with the severest strain can one see him as belonging in a Communist or Public School context. As of Mr. Empson's, though for opposite reasons, one has doubts about his development; but this is an opportunity to recall his remarkable long poem, *A Bravery of Earth*, which came out a year or two ago and deserves more attention that it got). Of the others, those who are qualified by intention for the desiderated new poetic order are notably lacking in technical achievement, even when they give signs of talent—especially then, for it is where the talented are concerned that the point is significant: a lack of due development in them, a lack of that sureness of self-realization, that awareness of essential purpose, which registers itself in technique, is just what one would expect in the absence of an intelligent public.

The absence of such a public is the most conclusive evidence of the absence of an effective contemporary sensibility, that general sensibility of an age to which the individual sensibility, whatever the conscious intention, is always related. A work of art, we can hardly remind ourselves too often, is never a merely individual achievement.

At any rate, the disadvantage of having no critical reception to expect is readily recognized. Neglect is not the only wrong an artist may suffer: uncritical acclamation may cheer him, but it will hardly do him any good. And uncritical acclamation has been the misfortune of Mr. W. H. Auden in particular, the dominating force in the new movement (for there really is a movement). When his 'Charade,' *Paid on Both Sides*, appeared in the *Criterion* several years ago there was good reason to be impressed: here was an undoubted new talent of impressive potentialities. But why

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when his first book, *Poems*, containing the 'Charade,' appeared he should have been discerned at once by all the 'discerning' (see the publishers' blurb on the dust-cover of *The Orators*) as a major luminary, and established in permanent acceptance, isn't easy to explain, for he is, while being neither nice nor like Mr. Richard Aldington, extremely difficult, and one can say with confidence that none of the critics who acclaimed him in superlative terms understood him or were irresistibly thrilled by him. But he is now well-known to the *Listener* public and annotated marginally by dons.

Of *The Orators* its reviewer in our weightiest literary review, while finding it (no mere modesty, as he went on to show) 'exceedingly difficult to understand, but in spite of this extraordinarily stimulating,' had 'no doubt that it is the most valuable contribution to English poetry since *The Waste Land*. The last ten years have been singularly unfruitful; the next ten years will show whether the promise in Mr. Auden's first volume of poems, published eighteen months ago, is fulfilled, as I believe it will be.'—The promise was undoubtedly there, and if it is fulfilled it will be in spite of the general reception exemplified by this encouraging reviewer. Mr. Auden is a highly intelligent man, and probably has his own opinion of his acclaimers. But in his kind of undertaking, in which it is so difficult to draw the line between necessary and unnecessary obscurity, he was peculiarly in need of the check represented by intelligent criticism and the expectation of it.

Some of the obscurity of the *Poems* was certainly unjustified; the signs of insufficiently sharp and sure realization were frequent; the notation was often both too general—a matter of vague gestures, and too personal—relying too much on private associations. But everyone knows now that modern poetry is difficult, that one doesn't expect to understand much, that one jumps from point to point, 'excited' or 'stimulated' by an image here and a rhythm there. Mr. Garman, reviewing *The Orators* in *Scrutiny* for September last, noted the significant use by the publishers of the word 'obscure.'

Anyway, *The Orators* (as Mr. Garman also noted) compared with *Poems* exhibits a falling-off. How distinguished a talent Mr. Auden can command the extraordinarily good opening piece in

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prose, *Address for a Prize-Day*, reminds us. But from the book as a whole it is plain that he has presumed on the reader's readiness to see subtlety and complexity in the undefined and unorganized, and has been too often content to set down what came more or less as it came. The adverse judgment, which might have remained longer suspended, is precipitated by an unignorable element of something like undergraduate cleverness, and where the level of seriousness is so uncertain, the benefit of the doubt—the doubt at any point whether the effort demanded of the reader is worth making—hardly accrues to the author.

There is reason, then, to deplore the uncritical acclamation that Mr. Auden has had to suffer. But in his case extravagance was comparatively reasonable, his talent being impressive; and his talent being also robust, we may hope that it will develop in spite of all. But when Mr. Stephen Spender is treated in the same way it is hard to look on with any patience. The publishers, on the dust-cover, give the cue: 'If Auden is the satirist of this poetical renascence, Spender is its lyric poet. In his work the experimentalism of the last two decades is beginning to find its reward. . . Technically, these poems appear to make a definite step forward in English poetry.'

Such a blurb as this from a firm with associations as distinguished as Messrs. Faber and Faber's is peculiarly lamentable (one remembers the one for Mr. Herbert Read, which announced that, though different, he was a poet as important as Mr. Eliot). Whoever was allowed to write it knew nothing about poetry—though that, perhaps, the public being what it is, was after all no serious disqualification. However that may be, the first thing anyone accustomed to reading poetry notices in Mr. Spender's verse is that though there are, perhaps, signs of a genuine impulse and a personal sensibility the technique is very immature and unstable. So far from being the subtle end-product of 'the experimentalism of the last two decades,' Mr. Spender is unformed enough to be able to reproduce (quite unwittingly, it seems) the Meredith of *Modern Love*:

> My parents quarrel in the neighbour room.
> 'How did you sleep last night?' 'I woke at four
> To hear the wind that sulks along the floor
> Blowing up dust like ashes from the tomb.'

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'I was awake at three.' 'I heard the moth
Breed perilous worms.' 'I wept
All night, watching your rest.' 'I never slept
Nor sleep at all.' Thus ghastly they speak, both.

As for such pieces as the following, one would hardly talk about 'technique,' but of the underlying immaturity, the absence of any realized personal response, of any precise, consistent feeling or vision to communicate:

Hopelessly wound round with the cords of street
Men wander down their lines of level graves.
Sometimes the maze knots into flaring caves
Where magic lantern faces skew for greeting.
Smile dawns with a harsh lightning, there's no speaking
And, far from lapping laughter, all's parched and hard.
Here the pale lily boys flaunt their bright lips,
Such pretty cups for money, and older whores
Skuttle rat-toothed into the dark outdoors.

The transition to the *Sinister Street* of the end of the passage is a comment on the realistic-sinister of the opening, where the imagery—'wound,' 'cords,' 'level graves,' 'maze,' 'knots' and so on—is quite unrealized; thought of from the outside, rather than felt in.

Slightly disguised in the technical modernizing, there is a good deal of Georgian; the following, indeed, might have come from one of the anthologies:

I hear the cries of evening, while the paw
Of dark creeps up the turf;
Sheep's bleating, swaying gull's cry, the rook's caw,
The hammering surf.

I am inconstant yet this constancy
Of natural rest twangs at my heart;
Town-bred, I feel the roots of each earth-cry
Tear me apart.

Sincere? One does not doubt it; but 'sincere' is not a very useful term in criticism. The glamorous-ineffable-vague to which

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Mr. Spender is given, and which, perhaps, accounts as much as anything for the emphasis on 'lyric' in the blurb quoted above, is obviously sincere:

> Your body is stars whose million glitter here:
> I am lost amongst the branches of this sky
> Here near my breast, here in my nostrils, here
> Where our vast arms like streams of fire lie.
>
> How can this end? My healing fills the night
> And hangs its flags in worlds I cannot near.
> Our movements range through miles, and when we kiss
> The moment widens to enclose long years.

It may be 'in a tradition which reaches back to the early Greek lyric poets' (the blurb again), but it has nothing in particular to do with the technical experimenting of the last two decades.

The official account, then, is preposterously unfair to Mr. Spender, and the contemporary cultural situation it reflects peculiarly unfavourable to the development of such a talent as his. Favourable reviews and a reputation are no substitute for the conditions represented by the existence of an intelligent public—the give-and-take that is necessary for self-realization, the pressure that, resisted or yielded to, determines direction, the intercourse that is collaboration (such collaboration as produces language, an analogy that, here as so often when art is in question, will repay a good deal of reflecting upon: the individual artist to-day is asked to do far too much for himself and far too much as an individual).

In the absence of these conditions it is natural to make the most of the Group:

> Wystan, Rex, all of you that have not fled,
> This is our world. . . .

writes Mr. Day Lewis. And it is difficult to see how a start can be made in any other way. But the very circumstances that make the Group essential enhance its disadvantages and dangers—some of them at any rate, even when the purpose is to work towards a new popular poetry:

> Lipcurl, Swiveleye, Bluster, Crock and Queer,
> Mister I'll-think-it-over, Miss Not-to-day,

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Young Who-the-hell-cares and old Let-us-pray,
Sir Après-moi-le-déluge. It is here
They get their orders. These will have to pay.

—For what public is this? It is certainly not esoteric; indeed, the simplicity is of a kind that one would have found appropriate in verse dedicated, as Mr. Auden dedicates some of his (not so simple), 'To my pupils.' As a little-language within the Group and its immediate connections such a mode no doubt has its uses, but in what spirit is it offered to the general public? Mr. Day Lewis employs it a great deal in *The Magnetic Mountain*, and what is more significant, mixes it with modes that belong to quite another plane—that can be considered as serious efforts towards the desiderated new poetry. One sees reflected in this uncertainty of purpose and level a confusion, very natural where the Group counts for so much and is the only certain audience, of the public occasion and context with the familiar. By any standards it is a curious instability that is exhibited here:

Iron in the soul,
Spirit steeled in fire,
Needle trembling on truth—
These shall draw me there.

The planets keep their course,
Blindly the bee comes home,
And I shall need no sextant
To prove I'm getting warm.

Near that miraculous mountain
Compass and clock must fail,
For space stands on its head there
And time chases its tail.

In the following, as often, there is a show of dramatic presentment, but this makes no apparent difference to the spirit in which the mode is offered:

You'll be leaving us soon and it's up to you boys,
Which shall it be? You must make your choice.
There's a war on, you know. Will you take your stand
In obsolete forts or in no-man's-land?

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Even in Mr. Auden, in his simple and often admirable guerrilla vein, the irony sometimes slips into something dangerously close to this Housemaster-Kipling-Chesterton simplicity. It seems relevant to note at this point that both in *Paid on Both Sides* and in *The Orators* there is a Public School background (and, one might add, a romantic element, qualifying the remarkable maturity, and drawing, one guesses, on memories of a childhood spent during the War). Indeed, to those who are not Public School—and to others, too, no doubt—the Communism of the Group offers an interesting study. Mr. Auden contributed a *Song* to the first number of *New Verse*:

I'll get a job in a factory
I'll live with working boys
I'll play them at darts in the public house
I'll share their sorrows and joys
Not live in a world that has had its day.

They won't tell you their secrets
Though you pay for their drinks at the bar
They'll tell you lies for your money
For they know you for what you are
That you live in a world that has had its day.

Ah! those secrets—and that superiority—of the working boys. There are a number of other verses in this very interesting simple mode, and the whole forms a curious psychological document, the more curious because of the undoubted subtlety of Mr. Auden's mind. The Editor of *New Signatures* thinks that Communism may favour satire, but it certainly hasn't given Mr. Auden a secure basis yet.

This criticism is offered with the reverse of a malicious intention. That a group of young writers, uniting a passionate and responsible concern about the state of contemporary civilization with a devotion to poetry, should have won some kind of public recognition is something. It would be a pity if a serious propagandist spirit should let itself get confused with a kind of higher boy-scouting, or the new poetic movement degenerate into a new Georgianism (Mrs. Naomi Mitchison's contribution in the communal style to the first number of *New Verse* would have been worth the printing if it served as a comic warning).

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To this new Georgianism Mr. Roy Campbell would stand as the Flecker. True, he infuses Parnassian rotundity with Byronic energy (He taught us little: but our soul had *felt* him like the thunder's roll), but he stands decidedly for Form—Form as the classically trained recognize it. He recognizes himself in *The Albatross (after Baudelaire)*:

> Like him the shining poet sunward steers,
> Whose rushing plumes the hurricanes inflate,

and the mastery with which he rides his hurricanes is really impressive. It is a genuine talent, and the conviction with which it is used, at this date, remarkable. One reflects sadly of the movement towards a new popular poetry considered above that not even its nearest approximations will be widely read. Mr. Campbell's verse, lyrical or satiric, is much less remote from popularity, and it is probably read—and not merely bought—by what may be called, comparatively, a public.

It would not be surprising to learn that Mr. Aldington's is read by a much larger, for it is 'free,' 'modernist' (as Mr. Harold Nicolson would say) and yet 'as easy to read as a novel.'

Mr. George Reavey's *Faust's Metamorphoses,* which is not naïve in its sophistication, has no public, and is the product of conditions in which no public for poetry exists. The cosmopolitan background of his introspections merely heightens or makes more obvious the common disabilities that the potential poet suffers to-day. To be so free to experiment in idiom and technique, to have so many possibilities before one—these are disadvantages that only remarkable genius could begin to overcome. It is as if the individual hadn't even a language to hand, but had to create one, and it is not only because of the problem of communication that an individually created language will be unsatisfactory.

The late Harry Crosby, an American living in France, actually uses a completely private language in some of his poems:

> Sthhe fous on ssu eod
> Ethueeu touud on ssu eod
> Htetouethdu tds foett
> Fhtdeueeue on ssu eod

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A game? The volume from which this comes has an introduction by D. H. Lawrence. The other three volumes are introduced by T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and Stuart Gilbert. Lawrence's volume contains this:

black black black black black
black black black black black
black black black black black
black black black black black
black black Sun black black
black black black black black
black black black black black
black black black black black
black black black black black

Mr. Eliot, in his introduction, says he thinks we find 'in Crosby's writings, that we do not pick out single poems for enjoyment: if any of it is worth reading, then it all is.' It should, however, be said that most of the pieces answer more ostensibly to Mr. Eliot's general account: 'Harry Crosby's verse was consistently, I think, the result of an effort to record as exactly as possible to his own satisfaction a particular way of apprehending life.' 'What interests me most, I find,' says Mr. Eliot later, 'is his search for a personal symbolism of imagery.' But one gathers that he means to disclaim any suggestion that he understands. Crosby's language, that is, remains predominately a private one.

Harry Crosby, it is plain, was a very charming person. The set of four slim, beautifully produced volumes, so illustriously sponsored, looks like being one of the most interesting literary curiosities of the age.

F. R. LEAVIS.

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SONGS OF EXPERIENCE

WORDS FOR MUSIC PERHAPS: AND OTHER POEMS, by W. B. Yeats (Cuala Press, 10/6d.).

A new volume by Mr. Yeats was, after *The Tower*, something for the liveliest expectancy. *Words for Music Perhaps* is not disappointing to those who have come to regard Mr. Yeats as one of the three or four more important contemporary poets.

The peculiar quality of Mr. Yeats' poetry is difficult to analyse. It depends partly on the fact that he is an Irishman: his English has a precision which suggests that he is always intensely conscious of the language as an instrument. Mr. Yeats has also trained himself in this stripping of language: during what might be called his 'salt and bones period' the training was more obvious than the achievement. His latest poetry shows this clarification as something no longer to be striven for, but effortlessly present in the work.

The first poem *Byzantium* (to be read with *Sailing to Byzantium* in *The Tower*) has a pungent concentration in imagery and vocabulary.

> The unpurged images of day recede;
> The Emperor's drunken soldiery are abed;
> Night's resonance recedes, night walker's song
> After great cathedral gong;
> A starlight or a moonlit dome distains
> All that man is;
> All mere complexities,
> The fury and the mire of human veins.

'Unpurged,' 'resonance' and 'distains' (with its curious inverted sense and its suggestion of 'distends') have the same tension and relaxing behind them as the alternate slackness and tautness of lines three-four and five-six: and this is the theme of the whole poem which deals (to put it very crudely) with the ordering of life through art, the creative power 'astraddle on the dolphin's mire and blood.' Time and the disorderly flux of living 'that dolphin-torn, that *gong-tormented* sea' are transmuted into the 'glory of changeless metal.' Yet since time is the 'resonant gong'

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there is a suggestion of the same changeless metal behind the flux, but only manifested through the transitory and dissolving circles of sound.

The difficulty of Mr. Yeats' poetry does not lie in complexity of verbal structure (*i.e.* ambiguities on a single level of meaning) but in the subtle interaction of movement and images; his poems are always metaphorical rather than direct statements. His writing has the maximum of concreteness with the minimum of particularity.

All the poems in this volume deal with the same or with kindred themes, so that the book produces a single impression and the less important poems gain from their contexts (for instance *Young Man's Song* from *Crazy Jane on God*). But the variations are perhaps representative of different levels of intensity rather than different levels of success. Yeats' tenderness and his harshness (which are complementary) have, as he would say, a 'blaze' that is hardly to be compared with any other contemporary except Lawrence.

> Sleep beloved such a sleep
> As did that wild Tristram know,
> When, the potion's work being done,
> Stag could run and roe leap
> Under oak and beeches bough
> Stag could leap and roe could run.
> . . . . . .
> Curse as you may, I sing it through;
> What matter if the knave
> That the most could pleasure you
> The children that he gave
> Are somewhere sleeping like a top
> Under a marble flag. . .

There is a predominance of lyric in the volume, but Mr. Yeats' epigrams are as penetrating as one has come to expect, and there is a good deal of statement on the contemporary situation in the longer poems (*e.g. Coole Park and Ballylee*). Perhaps there is nothing so fine as parts of *The Tower*: and the alterations in the Crazy Jane poems seem to me unfortunate. But the best of this volume will certainly rank with the best work of Mr. Yeats.

M. C. BRADBROOK.

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DUNBAR AND THE 'SCOTTISH RENAISSANCE'

THE POEMS OF WILLIAM DUNBAR. Edited by William Mackay Mackenzie, M.A., D.Litt. (The Porpoise Press, Edinburgh).

Dunbar is an accomplished metrist. To say this is to say something much more important than is commonly intended. It is to imply his maturity in the sense that he comes at the end rather than at the beginning of a growth of poetical tradition. His arrangements of words have behind them an obviously considerable traditional sanction. Secondly, his forms and conventions modified as they were by his particular language were European, the expressions of a European consciousness, in the sense that they were common to the poets of Medieval Europe modified by the language—English, French, Italian or Church Latin—of each. Thirdly, the particular language he wrote in was not French, Italian, Latin, nor on the other hand Gaelic; it was—and this is also important—Northern English or Scots. Taken together, the second and third of these commonplaces imply a poetry that it is Medieval and European and at the same time Scottish.

It is in this sense that Burns is provincial in comparison with Dunbar. It is not merely that Dunbar is a 'court poet,' Burns the culmination of a folk-song tradition. The Scotland of Burns no longer formed part of a European background; his verse could not have stood the introduction of Latin lines. To-day Mr. C. M. Grieve ('Hugh McDiarmid') attempting to write a Scottish poetry is a forlorn and isolated figure, the European background having vanished, and Scotland with it.

When therefore Mr. Grieve reiterates 'Not Burns—Dunbar!' no doubt his instinct guides him right. There is, it seems, better reason for going back to Dunbar than the negative one that it is necessary to get away from Burns. On the other hand it should not be surprising that however much Mr. Grieve may want to go back to Dunbar there is little evidence in his verse—and this after all is the ultimate test—that he has succeeded.

'Dunbar,' says Mr. Grieve elsewhere, 'is singularly modern.' To say that a poet is modern is really only another way of saying

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he is significant. Modern in the sense that every poet rightly understood is modern Dunbar certainly is, or might be. It is in order that he may be modern in this sense that it is so necessary to emphasize that he is Medieval and not Renaissance. In so far as his verse is a summing up it is of course a criticism; he is almost pushed outside his material, almost but not quite. His connections with the poets of the Renaissance are on the other hand comparatively few and slender. Mr. Allen Tate in the *New Republic* recently suggested a connection between Dunbar and Donne's Satires through Sackville's *Induction*. There is indeed a superficial resemblance since all three start from a medieval sense of human depravity and the vanity of earthly things, but that only serves to emphasize how singularly little there is in common between the textures of their verse. A relationship could probably be established between some of the *Romaunt of the Rose* conventions and the *Faerie Queene*. But *The Golden Targe* and other poems in the 'Aureate Diction' one tends to set aside in one's mind rather as brilliant exercises. Only occasionally are certain of their elements found with the other elements of Dunbar's poetry, as they are for instance in the *Meditatioun in Wyntir*, in which the personifications are unmistakably the expression of a deeply-rooted mental habit. The verses modelled on the Latin hymns also separate themselves out, because of their extreme formality and Latinized stiffness, from the rest of his work, though what they in particular represent is essential to the blasphemy and profanity of the *Drigy* and the *Testament of Kennedy*.

But Dunbar's achievement in the poems which are the core of his work is his combination of formalism with a closeness to speech. It is on this speech norm that his range, the ease of his transitions, depends. It is also related to his Ben-Jonsonian pilings up of language, and again to the use he makes of the native alliterative and assonantal element which has been largely discarded. Dunbar works inward from the mechanical practice of his predecessors to the roots of this habit, as Hopkins (and Shakespeare) work outward to it.

To write in Scots a poetry that is based on living speech (as the major part of Dunbar is) or even to write a Scots poetry that is based on a language of immediate literary practice (as is *The Golden Targe*) is no longer possible. The 'synthetic Scots'

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Mr. Grieve has put together is based neither on the one nor the other. The Scottish dialects are in the last stages of decay, and when a language has decayed a whole tradition has inevitably decayed with it. There now remains nothing distinctively Scottish about the life of the Scottish towns. The daily routine and amusement (American films, etc.) of the townspeople have been standardized. The countrypeople are learning to share the town amusements by means of 'bus and wireless. The country has ceased to possess a life apart from the towns. It is penetrated by the motoring roads, and overflowed in summer by the holiday crowds.

It is, no doubt, as part of the 'Scottish Literary Renaissance' that the Porpoise Press has brought out this edition of Dunbar. But you cannot have a 'Renaissance' to order. The one thing certain about this 'Scottish Renaissance' is that measured by achievement there is no such thing; the Irish one happened just in time. Mr. Grieve, and those who are interested (and disinterested) enough to have brought out this edition of Dunbar, at least prevent it from degenerating into a mere advertisement stunt (every Scotsman who writes a book now has his name catalogued with the two or three hundred others in the Movement). But if Dunbar is to be important in his particular way one is at least entitled to expect some intelligent criticism of him. Rachel Annand Taylor's book (Faber and Faber) represents the general level, being a protest in Paterian prose that Dunbar did not write like a poet of the 1890's. In comparison Dr. Mackenzie's Introduction is at least useful. A new edition of Dunbar is indeed itself justification for this 'Scottish Renaissance,' for it is as a 'modern' in the sense already used that Dunbar is important or not at all.

JOHN SPEIRS.

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DONNE NOT AN ELIZABETHAN

THE OXFORD BOOK OF SIXTEENTH CENTURY VERSE. Chosen and Edited by Sir Edmund Chambers, 8/6d.

The mere bulk of verse written in the 16th century is enough to warrant a selection being made from it. Time cannot be spared for great whales of poetry like *The Spider and the Fly*, Warner's *England's Albion, Poly-Olbion*, or *The Purple Island*, though anyone interested in 16th century verse cannot wholly neglect them; and few readers will try the whole of even so delightful a poet as Nicolas Breton. Yet to give the critical reader just so much of it as will enable him to form a proper estimate of the age's varied achievements is no easy matter. A critical anthology—one as useful as Professor Grierson's anthology of Metaphysical Poetry—would include a great deal passed over by the conventional anthologist. The conventional anthologist seems to think 16th century verse is gay and light-hearted, 'laying its emphasis on beauty and desire and roses and the moon,' in an effort to make the too-much loved earth more lovely, and so confines himself almost entirely to the song-books, and to the pastorals, sonnets and narratives of the court-circle. He forgets how much popular verse was written and sung—ballads and jigs, narrative, political, religious and satirical, not without influence on more formal literature. He leaves out the epigrams (they are appallingly dull, it is true) and the satires (which are hardly better than the epigrams until the savage and splenetic outbursts of the '90's). Verse translations which so much increased the resources of verse are at best very meagrely represented; and the voluminous occasional verse of the period—the eulogies, odes, congratulations, epithalamiums, epistles and anniversaries which are quite as characteristic as the purple passages of Marlowe and Spenser—these are not 'poetic' enough for the average savourer of anthologies. Yet a critical anthology would give us representative specimens of these kinds of verse because without some knowledge of them no one is likely to understand 16th century taste in verse and unless we do understand this taste—a very different one from ours or Sir Edmund Chambers', we are bound to misread, particularly when

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we come to the familiar anthology pieces. We are happily grown out of the period when critics looked for ' terrible tales of passion ' in sonnet-sequences and were outraged at the insincerity of poets who adapted and translated from others, but there is still the same need for caution—doesn't Sir Edmund Chambers attempt to apply ' an absolute standard of poetry ' when selecting?

The average reader would find our ideal critical anthology dull for still another reason. In the twelve-volume anthology projected by Ezra Pound, each poem was to be admitted not merely because it was a nice poem or a poem Aunt Hepsy liked but because it contained an invention, a definite contribution to the art of verbal expression. A good many 16th century poems would have to be admitted on this score, and on this score only—the average reader would yawn over them, but then the average reader's ideal anthology is a book to dip into when dropping off to sleep. Technical innovations and experiments make up quite half of Wyatt's production for instance—no one would include his sonnets on their intrinsic merit, and his translations from second- and third-rate Italians are more or less successful exercises, but almost always exercises only. None the less these exercises were important in his time just as *The Shepheard's Kalendar* was important in the '80's. Experiments in classical prosody came to nothing but the anthology which omitted examples would be incomplete. Sidney, Spenser and Harvey (at one time) were serious enough about it, and later, Campion tried his hand. Stanyhurst of course is a figure of fun, but a sample of his eccentricities (as well as his more successful *Prayer to the Trinity*) might be included. And if we are not to neglect the most important form of 16th century verse there must be a full selection of blank verse from Grimauld and Surrey onwards, even though it means lifting lines from their context in a play. The dangers in doing so are obvious, but there is no reason to resemble Charles Lamb's selections either in intention or results.

Sir Edmund Chambers is not the conventional anthologist—or rather is far less conventional than either his introduction or his inclusion among the Oxford Books of Verse would suggest. His choice of lyrics from miscellanies and anthologies and his selections from the voluminous sonneteers are admirable. Though they have a very brief innings, the translators appear in extracts from

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Douglas, Golding, Harington, Fairfax and Marlowe. Room has been found for several of the longer poems: Sackville's *Induction,* Spenser's *Epithalamium, Hero and Leander, Venus and Adonis,* Davies' *Orchestra,* and Ralegh's *Cynthia,* as well as Daniel's *Epistles* to Sir Thomas Egerton—and to the Countess of Cumberland. Daniel, Ralegh and Fulke Greville in particular have been well served, and so too have most of the major figures, Wyatt, Spenser, Sidney, Drayton, Campion; and it is pleasant to see the *Nut-Brown Maid* beginning the anthology.

Yet *The Oxford Book of Sixteenth Century Verse* is very far from being the ideal critical anthology. It leaves out far too much, and some of the exclusions argue an incomplete sympathy with some of the most characteristic verse of the period. Translations are too meagrely represented—there is nothing from Chapman's 1597 translation of Homer for instance; except for *Rose-Cheeked Laura,* and Sidney's *O sweet woods the delight of solitariness,* experiments in classical prosody are passed over; and popular verse is almost entirely neglected. These are small faults, however, in comparison with the almost total exclusion of satire and the omission of blank verse. A curious excuse is offered for leaving out John Donne. It seems that 'only for chronology, indeed, can Donne be an Elizabethan'; and so with Jonson: he is left for *The Oxford Book of Seventeenth Century Verse*! Most of Donne's best secular verse was written before 1600—*Songs and Sonnets,* the *Satires,* most of the *Elegies,* possibly *The Progresse of the Soule,* and many of his best verse-letters. Why he should be left out is not easily understood—whether he was Elizabethan or not is beside the point in a 16th century anthology, and it is arguable that Donne was by no means an isolated figure among the young wits of the '90's. We can see his affinities, that is, with Ralegh and Fulke Greville, with Sir John Davies (see the gulling sonnets, parodies and epigrams characteristically left out by Sir Edmund) and with the Chapman of *Ovid's Banquet of Sense*; and in his satires he ought to be read with Hall and Marston in mind. After all, Shakespeare's sonnets and *The Phœnix and the Turtle* are included. If they are 'Elizabethan,' so is Donne.

Sir Edmund Chambers' notion of the Elizabethan ethos is evidently at fault when it leads to the omission of Donne and to the neglect of his young contemporaries. Admittedly their epigrams,

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satires and elegies are rarely great poetry, but elsewhere Sir Edmund has 'shewn a decent tenderness towards beginners' and we can only conclude that his taste must have been formed at a time when it was still possible to ask whether satire could be poetry at all and when Dryden and Pope were considered classics of our prose. The expression of 'negative emotions' (those springing from disgust with the object, explosions of spleen, and hatred, and contempt, engendered by the clash of personalities and the hostility of circumstances—see E. Rickword[1]) is common in the period, and not necessarily unpoetic. It is particularly characteristic of the new writers at the close of the century, and its omission from *The Oxford Book of Sixteenth Century Verse* makes this incomplete, and will no doubt help to perpetuate a falsely romantic view of the Elizabethans.

Opinions will vary as to the wisdom of modernizing spelling, capitalization and punctuation, and of supplying and re-writing titles. After the devastating exposure of Q's version of Shakespeare's 129th sonnet (see Robert Graves and Laura Riding in *A Survey of Modernist Poetry*) there is not much excuse for thinking the matter of small importance, and of condescendingly paying 'some regard' when the author's intention is apparent. As for retitling, it will be remembered that Q in his coyness gives us *Vixi Puellis Nuper Idoneus . . .* for Wyatt's *The lover showeth how he is forsaken of such as he sometime enjoyed . . .* Not to be outdone, Sir Edmund heads the poem—*Remembrance* !

The ideal critical anthology we desiderated has still to be compiled. In the meantime the next best thing is not *The Oxford Book of Sixteenth Century Verse,* but *The Poetry of the English Renaissance,* by Hebel and Hudson.

W. A. EDWARDS.

[1]In an essay *The Re-Creation of Poetry,* reprinted from *The Calendar of Modern Letters* in *Towards Standards of Criticism* (Wishart).

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SIXTEEN BOBS'-WORTH OF CULTURE

THE ENGLISH MUSE, by Oliver Elton (Bell, 16/-).

In his Preface, Dr. Elton proclaims that he 'would fain write' for all who like himself 'regard poetry as a material part of their life and religion.' His purpose would be more understandable were the word 'livelihood' substituted for 'life,' for, except as one more professional guide to the beauty-spots of English verse, one can see no useful purpose that his book can serve. As an historical survey it is inadequate; its scholarship is entirely unimpressive; such criticism as it contains is vague, uncoordinated, slipshod and sentimental. 'The emphasis,' he tells us, 'is on the poetry, on poetry for its own sake,' but he is careful to attempt no definition of the term, and a copious reading in his book supplies none. With his assertion that 'There is true continuity of spirit, as well as of expression, in our poetry,' one would not quarrel, were it founded upon more convincing proof than that 'The melancholy of the *Seafarer* might be detected in some of Conrad's inarticulate British sailors; chivalry is the same in *Maldon*, in the *Battle of Otterburne*, and in the *Lady of the Lake*.' Such inept illustration may prepare us for the staggering advice to 'Dream of it [our poetry] for a moment as all written by a single poet of unimaginable gifts and older than Methuselah'; but it does not create confidence in the cicerone.

That such a method of approach is unsatisfactory is borne out by the resulting confusion. There is scarcely a suggestion throughout the book that poets are faced at different times with different problems of expression, nor is any attempt made to relate the individual work to the conditions, social, moral and political, under which it was achieved. It is true that a great number of poets are named, that many of their writings are briefly summarized and their merits commented on: but the comments are for the most part banal and often dogmatically unperspicacious. Marvell, we are told, 'is, like Christina Rossetti, the poet of fruit'; Donne's satires 'are not poetry, and often, what with their wrenchings of the metrical accent, they are not verse'; 'Spenser's indignation, unlike that of Dryden and Pope, is genuine'; while the method of the *Canterbury Tales* 'is minute, in a sense primitive, not unlike the pictures of Ford Madox Brown.' Nor is the Professor

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more convincing in his less particular judgments. After discussing Hudibras he decides 'Still, the rub of the critical reason is not favourable to poetry,' and in reference to Milton he writes: 'In purity and sureness of language perhaps his nearest heir is Shelley'—an opinion which, apart from its precariousness, scarcely bears out his earlier one that 'Between Marlowe and Shelley it is hard to think of any major poet whose language is in the same degree pure, great and natural.'

But to follow Doctor Elton step by step on his tedious, and surely unnecessary, journey is not possible. One may summarize one's criticism by saying that perusal of the book confirms one in the conviction that discussion of poetry in vague, enervate generalizations can do nothing but harm, and that, however profitable it may prove to the professors, practitioners and enjoyers of literature will find it unprofitable and exasperating.

DOUGLAS GARMAN.

THE LOST LEADER, A STUDY OF WORDSWORTH; by Hugh I'Anson Fausset (Cape, 12/6d.).

This book is serious-minded, well-documented, accurate, full of uplift, rather long and rather dull. Mr. I'Anson Fausset deals with Wordsworth in his boyhood, accumulating sensations 'in genial confidence' ('The State of Nature'); with the beginnings of self consciousness ('The Dawn of Self'); with the effects on him of the French Revolution, and his affair with Annette Vallon ('The Fall'); with his subsequent disillusionment and dallyings with Godwinism ('The State of Sin'); with his intimacy with Coleridge at Racedown and Alfoxden ('The Revival'); Lyrical Ballads ('The First-fruits'); with the visit to Germany in 1799, and the temporary inability of the poet to continue his spring-time exuberance in winter and in the absence of Coleridge ('Relapse and Recovery'); Dove Cottage ('The Return of the Native'); Coleridge again, the poems written in 1802, the settlement with Annette, and (as he hoped) with himself ('The Harvest'); marriage and the first eight books of the Prelude, etc., 1802—1804 ('Journey's End'); the death of his brother, and the realization

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that he had not succeeded in permanently recapturing his adolescent equilibrium (' The Time of Trial ') ; and his final lapse into sapless orthodoxy (' The Last Retreat ').

The tone of the book, and Mr. Fausset's method of approaching his subject, is best indicated by three quotations. Of the poet himself he says: ' Wordsworth . . . . was a potential mystic who failed to complete himself at a crucial point, failed to pass from the state of childhood and boyhood when the spiritual is inevitably a condition of the natural to a creative maturity when the natural should be as inevitably a condition of the spiritual.' Of the *Lyrical Ballads* he says: ' Of their charm and freshness as poetry it is not necessary to speak: what we are concerned with here is the degree of their life-wisdom.' In the last chapter, after speaking of the ' mysterious forces of life ' he sums up his intentions ;—' . . . our purpose in this book has simply been to suggest through the life-history of a singular man and a great poet something of what those forces demand if mankind is to grow beyond its present stage of conflict.' There is much more in the same tone. Here is a comment on the *Idiot Boy*. ' This mingling of domestic simplicity with a strange otherness which transcends all human dimensions was but another proof of the close affinity of Wordsworth's own primitive consciousness with the primitive natures of which he wrote. For behind all the credulity of primitive superstition lies a true and immediate sense of a spiritual world that circles and permeates the material.' If the attitude to poetry indicated by these quotations seems valuable, and if this kind of writing means anything to you, then you will like Mr. Fausset's book ; if not, you won't.

I have only to add that Mr. Empson in a paragraph or so of analysis of *Tintern Abbey* comes to much the same conclusions as Mr. Fausset does in the course of his volume ; and expresses them much more clearly: that the article on Wordsworth's Political Ideas in the December *Scrutiny* deals more briefly, and more convincingly with this subject than does Mr. Fausset: and that the quotations which in this book go to prove Wordsworth's affinities with the infinite, the eternal mind, and ' otherness ' generally, admirably document the theory of the poet's psychological abnormalities discussed in ' Wordsworth and Professor Babbitt ' last quarter.

T. R. BARNES.

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THE MEANING OF MODERN SCULPTURE, by R. H. Wilenski (Faber and Faber, 10/6d.).

ART AND COMMONSENSE, by S. C. Kaines-Smith (The Medici Society, 6/-).

CHARACTERISTICS OF FRENCH ART, by Roger Fry (Chatto and Windus, 12/6d.).

PURPOSE AND ADMIRATION, by J. E. Barton (Christophers, 10/6d.).

Month after month the art books come out, and one stands amazed at the thought of the throngs who await initiation, and of those already initiated wishing refinement; at least publishers give evidence of believing in these throngs, and they ought to know. This suburban serious-mindedness, whether admirable or pathetic depending upon whom one happens to think of as novice and whom as priest, one associates more with England than America. In America it has taken the direction of social glorification—'He held them spellbound with his anecdotes about Cézanne'—although heaven knows England is not spotless.

Here are four books, a cross-section of the possibilities, for those desiring enlightenment and no bones made about your motives. Mr. Barton and Mr. Kaines-Smith one imagines are talking to the same group. The former, who gave his material as lectures over the B.B.C. before making it a book, takes their interest for granted, and, pince-nez lowered to the page, goes quietly ahead. But Mr. Kaines-Smith is not so sure. He hears the shuffling of feet, doubtful before the door of the gallery. He goes out, pipe in mouth, hands in pockets; "Well, old man. . .' From both books one learns that a genius is a superior personality, an individual with something to say, that the subject is the link between the artist and the audience, their common ground, that there are limitations to the purposes for which a medium may be used. Both point out that the water colours mother did before she was married are not art. Mr. Kaines-Smith is a bit cynical over the value of Matisse and Picasso; Mr. Barton discusses the relation of art to its cultural environment at some length, and concludes that even to-day there is a body of intelligent people, no more in one class than in another, who are about to codify a standard of taste

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and support the arts: to this extent each takes his own path. Otherwise one suspects that the two gentlemen have looked at the same paintings and statues, and, what is more important, read the same books.

The paper-chase through the woods ends about where it began. It's been a grey, viewless day, and we're not even out of breath; although some of the trees looked pretty rotten none of them fell; there was no damage done. Already we're thinking of lunch. Perhaps we ought to warn people about those rotten trees. No, the thought of going back for another look is too much.

Mr. Roger Fry delivers lectures for people who have heard paintings and artists discussed with the same casualness as the servant-problem and who know they are interested in learning more. *Characteristics of French Art* is an expanded reprinting of Mr. Fry's lectures at the Queen's Hall last year. He speaks of the most important French artists and of their specific works, wasting little time on large generalizations; the characteristics of French art and the stylistic relations of the various artists come out incidentally. His judgments are just and the book interesting and informing, and the manner in which it is written reveals that Mr. Fry can be dignified without falling into pomposity or the necessity of cracking a nervous joke from time to time.

The Meaning of Modern Sculpture is a dogmatic and lively book. Mr. Wilenski adopts the method of dialectical materialism to explode the prejudices which interfere with most people's understanding of modern sculpture. Critics and archeologists have told us that Greek scuplture is the final statement for all time because that's how they make their living. And the same is true of the prejudice about Renaissance and Romantic sculpture. He does not attempt to give a complete evaluation of these styles: after his readers have been told of faking and copying and been shown examples of windy emotive writing upon which the prejudice rests, then it's up to them. In contrast to these styles the Egyptian, archaic Greek, African negro, Chinese and Japanese Buddhist, styles from which the modern sculptor has taken suggestions for his own work, are briefly discussed. Neither here nor among the illustrations from modern sculpture does he attempt any detailed evaluations; what interests him most is the modern sculptor's creed: that the material must 'collaborate' with the sculptor's

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concept ; that the sphere, the cone and the cylinder are the common denominators of all form, etc. The extent to which he goes into philosophical realism to give modern sculpture a metaphysical justification seems unnecessary, but it is at least a fault of energy. Some of the sculptors themselves seem to have been carried away by the desire to express ' the universal analogy of form '—to have been moved more by the theory than by observation. Mr. Moore's ' Mountains ' illustrates this. Not unrelated is the fact that, as Mr. Wilenski says, the modern sculptor overlooks the religious purposes which were in part responsible for Egyptian and Negro and other sculpture, being interested only in their expression of formal relations. That is obviously the only thing the modern sculptor can do, but when one sees the diffusion and insecurity of large tracts of modern sculpture it is plain that these religious purposes and all their social implications played a large part in the background of the earlier styles, and that Mr. Wilenski's metaphysic has not and cannot make up for what has been lost.

DONALD CULVER.

DOSTOEVSKY OR DICKENS ?

LIGHT IN AUGUST, by William Faulkner (Chatto and Windus, 8/6d.).

Dostoevsky was influenced by Dickens, but they are very different. *Light in August,* which is more readable than William Faulkner's earlier books, should make it plain that he is much more like Dickens than like Dostoevsky. It is more readable because in it Faulkner has been much less concerned to be modern in technique. But he has still been concerned too much.

It is his ' technique,' of course, that, together with his dealings in abnormal or subnormal mentality and his disregard of the polite taboos, has gained for him, in France as well as in America and England, his reputation as one of the most significant and peculiarly modern of writers. The technique that matters is the means of

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expressing a firmly realized purpose, growing out of a personal sensibility. Early in *Light in August* it should have become plain to the reader that Faulkner's 'technique' is an expression of—or disguise for—an uncertainty about what he is trying to do.

There is, for instance, that Gertrude-Steinian trick: 'Memory believes before knowing remembers. Believes longer than recollects, longer than knowing even wonders. Knows remembers believes' etc. Here it is incidental to a rendering (for the most part in a quite unrelated manner, and one of the best things in the book) of childhood experience. But it is sporadic, applied to various kinds of characters in various circumstances, and it is never supported by that minute intimacy in the registering of consciousness which it implies. Indeed, Faulkner is seldom for long sure of the point of view he is writing from, and will alter his focus and his notation casually, it would seem, and almost without knowing it.

This pervasive uncertainty of method goes down to a central and radical uncertainty. If what is apparently meant to be the central theme of the book, the conflict in Christmas of the white and the negro blood, had been realized and active, we should necessarily have had somewhere and by some means an intimate and subtle rendering of his consciousness. But in spite of the technique and in spite of the digression—for it strikes us as that—back into childhood, he remains the monotonously 'baleful' melodramatic villain whose mysteriousness is of so familiar a kind, depending on our having only a surface to contemplate. Faulkner, in fact, in his vision of Good and Evil is like Dickens—at his best simple, at his worst sentimental and melodramatic. The brutal submorality of Christmas might have been significant in a Dostoevsky context and, so, interesting; but when Faulkner, rightly not trusting the job made of it by his 'technique,' pumps in the Significance straightforwardly at the death of Christmas, its quality appears in the prose of this:

'Then Grimm too sprang back, flinging behind him the bloody butcher knife. "Now you'll let white women alone, even in hell," he said. But the man on the floor had not moved. He just lay there, with his eyes open and empty of everything save consciousness, and with something, a shadow, about the mouth. For a long moment he looked up at them with peaceful and unfathomable and unbearable eyes. Then his face, body, all, seemed to collapse,

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to fall in upon itself, and from out the slashed garments about his hips and loins the pent black blood seemed to rush like a released breath. It seemed to rush out of his pale body like the rush of sparks from a rising rocket ; upon that black blast the man seemed to rise soaring into their memories for ever and ever. They are not to lose it, in whatever peaceful valleys, besides whatever placid and reassuring streams of old age, in the mirroring faces of whatever children they will contemplate old disasters and newer hopes. It will be there, musing, quiet, steadfast, not fading and not particularly threatful, but of itself alone serene, of itself alone triumphant.'

There are, as has been implied, good parts. The account of Christmas's childhood and boyhood is one of these. But it remains, like so much else in the book, separate, unrelated organically, and the subject of it is only nominally related to the villain-hero who dies in the passage quoted above. The long history of the family of Miss Burden, the murdered paramour, is also good in its way, and the tacking on is done with an innocent directness contrasting oddly with the pervasive ' technique ' : ' She told Christmas this while they sat on the cot in the darkening cabin.'

The Reverend Gail Hightower, another main character, again illustrates the uncertainty of grasp and purpose. He hovers between the planes of Mr. Dick and Miss Havisham, soaring up to the latter (in cheap prose and cheap sentiment) when Significance gives the cue. The old couple, Hines, belong irremediably to the plane of Dickensian-grotesque, but they are solemnly pushed on the stage as tragic actors.

What Faulkner renders with most conviction is the simple-shrewd vegetative mentality of his rustics and small-town citizens (indeed, he finds it so congenial that he again and again uses it, quite improbably and with great technical naïveté, as the medium of presentation). His heart is with his simple heroine and hero, Lena and Byron Bunch, and where they are concerned his sentimentality is not offensive as it is in his flights of high-tragic Significance. The Old South is the strength of his book: one gets intimations of a mellow cultural tradition, still, it appears, in some degree surviving, that recall that great book, *Huckleberry Finn.* But it is too late for another Mark Twain.

F. R. LEAVIS.

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QUICUNQUE VULT . . .

We all know that the romantic-humanitarian applecart has upset, and that the period inaugurated by the Renaissance is drawing to a dismal close. Thirty million unemployed is sufficient index of disorganization in the economic world, and the parallel disorder in contemporary thought hardly needs to be demonstrated,—religion-substitutes at all levels come too readily to mind. In 'that state of slush in which we have the misfortune to live' (since Hulme's somewhat too emotional phrase has gained currency) *Essays in Order* would seem to have made a timely appearance. By their insistence on clarity, discipline and intellectual rigour they seem to offer an escape from the vague emotions and the verbalism of our modern prophets and to suggest a new foundation for religion and culture. Unfortunately the order proves to be illusory—a shifting of counters rather than the ordering of genuine experience—whilst the neo-Thomist appeal to the sovereign intellect is barren because of the nature of the appeal.

'It is the Catholic ideal,' says Mr. Dawson in his General Introduction to the series, 'to order the whole of life towards unity, not by the denial and destruction of the natural human values, but by bringing them into living relation with spiritual truth and spiritual reality.' The essays are admittedly tentative and unsystematic, but each aims to suggest principles of order in various fields 'in the light of absolute spiritual principles.' Without at present inquiring too closely into the meaning of such phrases as 'to order the whole of life towards unity' we may admit that it is a notable attempt.

It is significant that the best parts of *Essays in Order,* or those at least to which it is easiest to assent, are destructive criticisms of the present industrial régime or general aphorisms on the nature of the good life: 'We have made the increase of wealth the one criterion of social improvement . . . But the standard of life is really not an economic but a vital thing' (Dawson, 8, p. 61).[1] Our economic organization represents a thoroughly non-rational consumption hand in hand with a highly

[1]For references see the list of books at the end of the review.

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rationalized production' (Schmitt, 5, p. 49). 'Extreme poverty is socially . . . a kind of Hell . . . The insufficiency of this world in the last century in face of problems directly involving the dignity of human personality and Christian justice is one of the most distressing phenomena of modern history' (Maritain, 1, pp. 28 and 31). We strongly approve also M. Maritain's account of the function of politics and economics (1, pp. 26-27), and his pregnant note on 'The Fecundity of Money' (1, pp. 61-62). But in all this there is nothing specifically Catholic or indeed specifically Christian (however much such opinions may owe to Christianity), and it is when we come to the explicit challenge of the Essays as Catholic propaganda that an uneasiness arises, an uneasiness springing from a doubt as to what is actually being discussed.

A few quotations concerning 'the modern dilemma' will give the doubt a more specific form:

(i) 'The attempt of the 19th century to prescribe spiritual ideals in literature and ethics, while refusing to admit the objective existence of a spiritual order, has ended in failure, and to-day we have to choose between the complete expulsion of the spiritual element from human life or its recognition as the very foundation of reality.' (Dawson, 1, p. xxv).

(ii) 'And thus we come back to the fundamental issue of the modern dilemma, an issue that may be expressed as the choice between religious and secular ideals or between the spiritual and the materialistic view of life . . . Either religion and spiritual culture must inspire the whole of life, or they will be thrown out of social life altogether. Either we must accept the materialistic view of life, which substitutes the worship of the machine and the absolutism of mass civilization for the ideals of the Christian and the humanitarian traditions, or else we must return to the spiritual foundations on which European civilization has been built and attempt to make the new material forces the instruments of a spiritual purpose.' (Dawson, 8, pp. 67-68).

(iii) 'The choice that is actually before us is not between an individualistic humanism and some form of collectivism, but between a collectivism that is purely mechanistic and one that is spiritual. Spiritual individualism is incapable of standing out

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against the collectivism and standardization of modern life: it is only by a return to spiritual solidarity that modern civilization can recover the spiritual principle of which it stands so greatly in need . . . We must make our choice between the material organization of the world—based either on economic exploitation or on an economic absolutism, which absorbs the whole of life and leaves no room for human values—and the Christian ideal of a spiritual order based on spiritual faith and animated by charity, which is the spiritual will.' (Dawson, 3, pp. 100-101 and 109).

In these passages the key-words, 'spiritual' and 'material,' are capable of a variety of definitions, and the meaning is in fact shifted from sentence to sentence to suit the general tenour of the argument. In (i) 'spiritual ideals' means 'humane, non-materialistic ideals' or simply 'ideals,' whilst 'a spiritual order' means 'a supernatural order.' In (ii) 'religious and secular ideals' are equated respectively with 'the spiritual and the materialistic view of life,' where 'spiritual' is made to serve both functions, so that those who are convinced of the necessity of spiritual, *i.e.* non-materialistic standards are persuaded to accept the spiritual, *i.e.* supernatural view of life. If this persuasion is effected the reader is not likely to question the assumption with which the second sentence opens—that religion and culture are inseparably connected—and he may even swallow 'materialistic' in the third sentence without remembering that 'the materialistic view of life,' *i.e.* a non-supernatural philosophy, does not necessarily mean 'the worship of the machine' and the acceptance of 'mass civilization.' 'Materialistic' is used throughout not merely as a philosophic term but for the sake of its emotional associations—Middletown, Bradford and the Bolsheviks of penny paper cartoons. There is no need to analyse the third passage in detail, but it is worth remarking that the possibility of 'some form of collectivism' in pursuit of non-mechanistic ideals has slipped out of the argument, thereby forcing an unreal dilemma. 'If we abandon the metaphysical element and content ourselves with purely ethical and social ideals . . . there is no longer any basis for a spiritual order' (Dawson, 3, p. 65). Certainly if we abandon metaphysics there can be no basis for a metaphysical order, but there is a human basis for order. The Catholic may reply that

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'the humanistic point of view [however we define it] is auxiliary to and dependent upon the religious point of view'—an assumption that enabled Mr. Eliot to make some pertinent criticisms of the Humanism of Irving Babbitt—but it is precisely this which Mr. Dawson was required to prove. Actually he assumes it as a premise so it is not surprising to find it implicit in his conclusion.

Failure at the points indicated is significant. If 'spiritual' is not to be a mere counter in an argument we must be convinced that it stands for something concretely realized, and the authors of the Essays show throughout a preference for thought so abstracted from the actualities of experience that it can have no real bearing on the issues involved. There is a parallel here with the practice of literary criticism;—we have only to ask why M. Maritain's *Art et Scolastique* was barren. In spite of its author's logical agility and his wide range of knowledge, it supplied no intellectual tools for the actual business of criticism—the discrimination of response before particular works—because it discussed generalized concepts—'art,' 'beauty,' etc.—with the aid of schematic abstractions—'integrity,' 'proportion,' '*éclat*' or '*clarté*'—which no amount of subsequent definition could render serviceable.[1] And if we turn to the chapter on Art in *The Bow in the Clouds* we find an even hazier mass of abstractions: 'The strictly artistic quality in a work of art is the display of significant form or pattern' (p. 88). 'The distinctively æsthetic intuition' is 'the artist's direct and concrete intuition of the form or pattern in objects . . . It is an intuition of that form or pattern as intrinsically and therefore necessarily invested with an ultimate quality irreducible to anything besides, in fact the specific quality of pattern as thus apprehensible. We term this quality beauty. Beauty has been aptly denominated *splendor formæ*—the resplendence of form or pattern. The description, of course, does not explain it—it is an indefinable ultimate—but it points out its essential dependence on pattern or significant form' (pp. 94-95). No training in interpretation can help us to make sense of this.

Such criticism points a moral. We require of a critic—whether of art or life—that he shall have developed a certain sensitiveness

[1]Compare the particularly profitless æstheticizing in *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.*

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to experience before he attempts to translate his reactions into conceptual terms. Such sensitiveness is not shown by the authors of the Essays, nowhere do we feel 'the negative presence of the concrete and particular' in their prose. 'Man, unlike the other animals,' M. Maritain warns us, 'has not a solid bedrock, as it were, of instinctive life constituting a definite structure of behaviour sufficiently determined to make the exercise of life possible. Any erosion or excavation or elimination of rational life in an attempt to discover that solid bedrock is a deadly error. There will be no end to the excavation, there is no solid and perfect structure, no natural regulation of the instinctive human life. The whole play of the instincts, be they as numerous and powerful as you like, is, in the case of man, open and exposed to view, involves a relative indetermination which finds its normal perfection and normal regulation in reason alone' (1 p. 4). But what is this 'reason' which, apparently, descends from heaven to order the turbulence of the instincts? Valid thinking, at any rate in the field under consideration, is inseparably connected with the perceptions, feelings and desires which are aspects of the instinctive life. If Spinoza's *Ethics* is permanently valuable it is because Spinoza's total reaction to human experience was sensitive and balanced, not merely because he possessed unusual powers of abstract thought. M. Maritain's clear-cut distinction is too simple. Herr Schmitt may assure us that 'Nature and reason are one' (5, p. 42) but the impression conveyed by the majority of the essays is of a schematic dualism, so that the 'order' which emerges is factitious—a matter of words only.

The general debility of the thinking is emphasized if we turn to particular judgments and opinions. Mr. Dawson advocates a democratic ideal which 'in its economic aspect is neither that of pure individualism nor that of pure State socialism; it is the ideal of a free co-operative economy in which every man has control over his own life and possesses an economic foundation for his social liberty. In other words, economic democracy means capitalism for all . . .' (8, p. 57). Readers of Mr. Tawney's *Equality* may well ask whether in Mr. Dawson's state no man will be 'debarred by economic or social privilege from developing his own genius or from enjoying the results of the genius of others' (8, p. 59), since under our present system of (theoretically)

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'capitalism for all' the fact of extreme inequality of opportunity is so obvious. Nor can we appeal with any confidence to 'the old European tradition of social and political freedom that has always been one of the essential elements in Western culture' (8, p. 53), when we remember the opportunities for development of, say, monastic serfs in the middle ages, or of the French peasants who made possible the court of *le Roy Soleil* and his successors. But a revival of that tradition is, apparently, all that we are offered as a safeguard against the predatory habits of financiers and industrialists. This complete lack of realism is shown in the distortion (it doesn't help to say that this is not 'intentional') which allows opponents to be dismissed so easily. Mr. Watkin tells us that 'For Lawrence the sole life to be lived is the life of physiological nature, the only "real knowledge" its sensual perception' (2, p. xxxix)—an error which unfortunately is not peculiar to Lawrence's opponents. Socialists 'are romantic enough to believe that man's spiritual and moral perfection will be attained by removing the cause of all our present hardships and inequalities associated with the present distribution of the good things of this life' (de la Bedoyère, 7, p. 63). We learn also that 'Those who are in favour of allowing the present economic order to develop along its own lines do not find themselves up against an ethical objection . . . but against its caricature, the growing class hatred which expresses the uncontrolled wishes of those who feel that such an order will not give them so much as it will give their neighbours' (7, p. 65)—a travesty of the class war that is only equalled by Mr. Dawson's account of Communists as 'people who believe in wrecks as a matter of principle' (8, p. 10). Still, Mr. Dawson hazarded the statement that 'as a working system' American capitalism 'is infinitely more successful than the Russian experiment' (1, p. xv)—it is no excuse that this was written in 1931—and he appears to be committed to the Spanish monarchy as well as to the British Empire (5, p. 14). He also speaks pityingly of those who 'have entirely lost sight of the real conditions of Western society in their concentration on the iniquities of that *mythological* Mumbo Jumbo—the capitalist system,' but since almost in the same breath he exalts 'the characteristically Western ideal of a society based on moral principles and the rights of the human personality' (5, pp. 21 and 23), it is pertinent

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to ask if the present violation of those rights in Berlin or Detroit (see 'The Great Ford Myth' in *The New Republic,* March 16th, 1932)—or for that matter in Durham—is entirely 'mythological.' The distortion is characteristic, since it facilitates an evasion of the real issues. We find a similar question-begging argument when education is dismissed: 'Nor can education improve matters, since if the teacher himself is without a humanist tradition or a spiritual discipline he cannot impart them to others' (3, p. 25).

The writers of the Essays have, of course, an impregnable shelter against all attacks—'the one thing that is necessary, namely religious faith' (8, p. 105). 'For human reason, considered without any relation whatever to God, is insufficient by its unaided natural resources to procure the good of men and nations' (1, pp. 31-32). About this there is no arguing—one either has the Faith or one hasn't—but the Essays are offered as a pragmatic justification of the Faith, and as such they are open to the kind of criticism that we have brought above. Such criticism seems particularly necessary since the attitude represented by the Essays is at present fairly common—even those who are not professing Christians find it intellectually *chic* to be 'influenced by T. E. Hulme,' to flirt with St. Thomas whilst evading the responsibilities of Christian belief.

L. C. KNIGHTS.

ESSAYS IN ORDER, published by Sheed and Ward. No. 1 *Religion and Culture,* by Jacques Maritain. With a General Introduction by Christopher Dawson (2/6d.). No. 2 *Crisis in the West,* by Peter Wust. With an Introduction by E. I. Watkin (2/6d.). No. 3 *Christianity and the New Age,* by Christopher Dawson (2/6d.). No. 4 *The Bow in the Clouds,* by E. I. Watkin (3/6d.). No. 5 *The Necessity of Politics,* by Carl Schmitt. With an Introduction by Christopher Dawson (2/6d.). No. 6 *The Russian Revolution,* by Nicholas Berdyaev (2/6d.). No. 7 *The Drift of Democracy,* by M. de la Bedoyère (2/6d.). No. 8 *The Modern Dilemma,* by Christopher Dawson (2/6d.). Other Essays have since appeared.

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IN JOB'S BALANCES, by Leo Chestov (Dent, 18/-).

Chestov is a writer who has already made something of a stir on the continent; but this is a disconcerting book, for it is difficult to know how to take it. It is disconcerting on two accounts. First, to the English reader it is odd to find a professional philosopher pressing a philosophical doctrine—in this case a theory of knowledge—neither by means of an independent analysis of experience, nor (in the main) with reference to the writings of other professional philosophers, but with reference to writers such as Dostoievsky and Tolstoy. I do not, of course, mean that it is to be expected that those who make a profession of philosophy have the monoply of philosophic acumen; I mean that it is surprising to learn that writers like Dostoievsky and Tolstoy have a theory of knowledge at all. And secondly, it is disconcerting to meet a writer who makes a philosophy out of misology. There have been, of course, many who have doubted the competence of reason to give reality (whatever that may mean); but rarely has a writer like Chestov come forward who makes a philosophy out of this doubt. And I think if we consider these two points we shall learn something of what Chestov has to teach us.

Let us take Chestov's misology first. His doctrine (which is stated most clearly in the first and last chapters, and illustrated in the six intervening chapters) is that, since Thales, almost the whole of European philosophical thinking has been on the wrong track. Philosophical writers, with few exceptions, have believed in reason and have sought for a truth which is universally valid. They have accepted unquestioned the principle of 'the autonomy of reason;' they have succumbed to an unexamined prejudice in favour of what is reasonable. And the result has been that philosophical thought, while boasting that it is 'free thought' (thought, that is, without reservation or presupposition), has been anything but free. Now, in spite of what Chestov says, there can be no real disadvantage in disentangling our thoughts, and I find a certain confusion in this charge which he brings against almost all philosophers and specially against Aristotle, Spinoza and Hegel. Philosophical thought would be open to the charge that it is 'unfree,' the charge of prejudice, if it had never doubted reason; but this is an hypothesis which cannot be asserted. And if and where it has doubted this 'autonomy of reason,' but has

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found it impossible to maintain the doubt, then surely it is 'free' on account of its belief in reason. Of course, if we say that philosophical thought is 'unfree' whenever it reaches a decision, then a belief in reason is certainly slavery; but so also is a disbelief in reason. In short, it is not (as Chestov suggests) the failure to *reject* reason which necessarily leaves thought 'unfree,' but the failure to *doubt* it: and while it is true that few philosophers have rejected it, the impression Chestov gives that few also have had the courage or the candour to doubt it, is certainly false. But there is another and more serious difficulty in Chestov's doctrine. He writes all through as if 'the autonomy of reason' and the autonomy of scientific explanation were the same thing. Reason, 'rationalism,' science and common sense are lumped together; and philosophy, because it believes in reason, is said to be committed to a view which sees the universe as a single, uniform, mechanical whole, a whole in which nothing is disconnected, in which everything is necessary. But this confusion of reason and science, which (in spite of what Hegel taught us) was almost a commonplace fifty years ago, is now a little out of date. There may be a 'case against reason,' but it should not be confused with the cases against 'rationalism,' science, or common sense. And again, this identification of reason and 'rationalism' leads Chestov to confuse 'what is universally valid' with 'what is universally believed.' He has little difficulty in showing that if we stick to what is universally believed we shall confine ourselves to merely 'normal experiences,' and that both science and common-sense have a horror of what appears to be abnormal. But the possibility of judgments which are universally valid in no sense depends upon there being anything whatever universally believed. The valid should be distinguished from the merely œcumenical. What is reasonable and mere normality (what is satisfactory to common sense) are not the same thing.

Chestov's philosophy, then, is a philosophy of misology. If thinkers, instead of reading Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason,* had read Dostoievsky's *The Voice from Underground* or Tolstoy's *The Diary of a Madman,* they would have discovered that the universe is not an 'organic' whole, a whole of related parts, but a whole in which things 'exist freely,' a whole in which there are no necessary connections, in which one thing does not 'follow'

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from another. This 'vision' of the universe is what we get when we have conquered the prejudice in favour of reason, this is the revelation of the world which came to Plotinus and Pascal; and it is true. And why is it true? Because, it seems, suddenness, disconnectedness, spontaneousness, unexpectedness are the unmistakable signs of truth. But the strength (or weakness) of a misological philosophy is that it is barred from giving reasons for its conclusions; and this brings me to the first point I put down for consideration. Since argument involves self-contradiction, the misologist must retreat on to the ground of 'assertion' and 'evidence.' Everywhere in this book there is assertion; the belief in reason is said to be the 'lie' at the heart of philosophy. And to support this assertion we are given, not argument, but 'evidence,' 'example' and 'illustration.'

The evidence Chestov calls to support his doctrine is, in some ways, the best part of the book. His chapters on Dostoievsky and Tolstoy are certainly interesting. But I find it difficult to believe that either of these writers was conscious of the theory of knowledge attributed to him here. The great truth to be got from Dostoievsky is, it seems, 'the conquest of the self-evident'; he teaches us to reject what is merely to be expected, what is normal, ordinary or (in Chestov's language) reasonable. Everything for Dostoievsky is abnormal, fresh, *sui generis*. But surely this is true of every artist; it is just what art means. And I cannot see that it involves a theory of knowledge or a philosophy at all. It is not philosophy; it is instinct. For the artist, this is not a 'valid' way of looking at the world; it is the only way. More profound, I think, is Chestov's study of Pascal. There he is dealing with a writer perplexed with the problem of knowledge, if not as a philosophical problem, at least as a theological problem; and a writer whose conclusion is almost misological. And naturally enough, such a doctrine as Chestov's will find (or at least look for and appear to find) support also from Plotinus.

Philosophy, then, is free thought; and because it is free it is misological. Philosophy is 'what matters most,' it is the attempt to find the meaning of life, to fix *le prix des choses*; and because it is these it is misological. *La raison a beau crier, elle ne peut mettre le prix aux choses*. And again, philosophy rejects the merely scientific, the merely mechanical explanation of the Universe, and

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therefore it must be misological. And on each of these points there is, I think, a certain amount of confusion and misconception. Chestov says: 'my task has consisted in showing that reason has not the power which it claims.' Certainly he asserts it, certainly he illustrates it. But it is difficult to determine in what sense he 'shows' it; for how can it be shown, explained? And this book, in spite of its eloquence, has not succeeded in convincing me that a misological *philosophy* is not a self-contradiction; indeed, this difficulty presents itself so constantly that as one reads one's first instinct is often to suspect an underlying irony.

MICHAEL OAKESHOTT.

A REALIST LOOKS AT DEMOCRACY, by Alderton Pink (Benn, 10/6d.), 1930.

IF THE BLIND LEAD, by Alderton Pink (Benn, 8/6d.), 1933.

In the earlier book Mr. Pink brought a good home-made critical apparatus to bear upon our civilization and diffused the kind of general information about their environment that should and could be in the possession of intelligent schoolboys. One could assent to everything said in it, but it would not bring anything fresh to anyone likely to read it. The book lacked edge; the writer could take nothing for granted in his audience, and its good qualities were due to the author's native intelligence, and not to any assistance he had gained from current ideas. In other words his case helps to make clear what we mean in *Scrutiny* by insisting upon the disintegration of culture.

Significantly, the reviewers deprived of their pap (Delisle Burns optimism) produced the usual complaint that there was not enough constructive criticism—as though the clearing of the ground represented by Mr. Pink's (and *Scrutiny's*) work were not the condition of any improvement, and thus positively constructive—and this second shorter book, more fecund and more concrete, supplements the earlier with an adequate stock-taking of education and with suggestions for reform. It is encouraging to find that he comments upon the same corruption noted in *Scrutiny*—the futility of present education and the shameful irresponsibility of universities, the classics, and the sterile scholarship displayed in the

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correspondence column of the *Times Literary Supplement,* to instance only a few examples; indeed *Scrutiny,* its associated educational movement and its implementing books might have been produced as part of Mr. Pink's programme. (The fact that one could remain in ignorance of his first book for so long is further evidence). Most of his generalizations and principles, for instance about the aims of education, are acceptable, but his positive proposals leave one uneasy: the kind of leader he would seem to approve—Bertrand Russell and H. G. Wells—are often rather worse than blind. For Mr. Wells see Vol. I, p. 80; and the review of Meiklejohn's *The Experimental College,* p. 297, may save further comment on Mr. Pink's proposals. The books present significant similarities and a significant difference. Meiklejohn's experiment failed, but it was made. Can one imagine an English university inviting Mr. Pink to experiment?

D.T.

ARNOLD BENNETT: AMERICAN VERSION

DREISER AND THE LAND OF THE FREE, by Dorothy Dudley (Wishart, 15/-).

This book is a document of unusual interest. That is not to pronounce it a good book. Indeed, its badness is an essential part of its documentary value, and is the reason, it might be said, for recommending it. 'It is a historical study of a phase of culture' (according to the dust-cover); it is a 'Novel of Facts' (according to the author); and it is, unintentionally, a fascinating document of cultural dissolution. An intelligent account of Dreiser's career might have been very interesting, but it could hardly have been so convincing or have told us more.

Dreiser, I have heard it remarked, shows us what there is to be said for Arnold Bennett. And the tropical rankness and profusion of the American phenomenon does indeed make the English analogue look chaste and austere—by comparison a triumph of spirit rather than of philistinism. The Man from the Middle West also made good in women's journalism, and on a much larger

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scale than the Man from the North: 'As five-fold Butterick editor and art-editor, he came as near to big business as any periodical in that day could bring him. He had a staff of thirty-two people.' His friends might laugh 'to think of him in this low-brow guise of fashion-dictator, but with characteristic seriousness and without shame he studied the problem—how to reach the ladies. He stimulated with ideas; ideas gave birth to longings, and longings to the need of new clothes. Women over the country felt that somehow a friend of theirs was breathing a tiny wind of danger into Butterick standards.' Before this he had had a shining career in newspapers and in a publishing firm of which the motto was: 'The worse the swill the better you can sell it.'

All this, and a great deal more, the rich extravagance of which cannot be even faintly suggested, Miss Dudley relates with complete and solemn complaisance: it is Dreiser 'carving a destiny.' True, her central preoccupation is his conquest of recognition as a writer. But she does not convey any sense of there being essential differences between his various activities—they all manifest his greatness. In short, she is as completely in and of her material, as completely innocent of values by which it might be even implicitly criticized, as Dreiser is with regard to his own novels.

This innocence, illustrated fantastically and almost incredibly throughout the book, constitutes its great significance. The author supposes her main theme to be the hostility in Dreiser's time of the American environment towards the artist. If she establishes it, it is not in the way she intends—though 'intention,' suggesting as it does something simple and clear, is perhaps misleading: the book is essentially a matter of getting it both or, if possible, more ways. Dreiser the lonely rebel, for instance, is explicitly and triumphantly represented as the incarnation of the spirit that has made modern America—the passion for 'supremacy,' no matter of what kind so long as it means recognition and 'luxury and refinement' (*i.e.* the American equivalents of Bennett's steam-yacht and Imperial Palace Hotel).

The only serious show of a case for making out hostility in this congenial environment is that Dreiser's novels fell foul of the lagging Victorian prudery of America. He did have genuine grievances against timid publishers, moral reviewers and comstockery in general. And it does seem that, as a matter of history, his was

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the decisive challenge: an American writer may now put as much of 'life' into his novel as he likes. But it does not follow that Dreiser is a great writer, or in any respect an innovator in his art. Miss Dudley repeats again and again, with ironical intention, the charge that he cannot write and has no feeling for words, but she does not refute it. Everything of his she quotes confirms it: his mode of expression is what one would expect of the school in which he learnt. And it isn't merely mode of expression, it is quality of mind: *Sister Carrie* is full of stuff that reminds one comically of *Tarzan of the Apes*. As for his method and approach, they are Edwardian: it is significant that H. G. Wells, Arnold Bennett and W. J. Locke were among the first to recognize him. It is perhaps also significant (or would be, if she were a little less completely without critical perception) that Miss Dudley, who pours out the names of American writers, incontinently and indiscriminately, as current coin, hardly mentions John Dos Passos (though her own enterprise suggests his influence).

The name of Dos Passos is at any rate relevant here. *Manhattan Transfer, Forty-second Parallel* and *Nineteen-Nineteen* not only represent a standard that makes Miss Dudley's claim for Dreiser look silly; they leave no excuse for supposing that an antiquated moral code was the chief cause of sterility and that its dissolution means that all will now go well. But there is every reason to suppose that Miss Dudley would not see the meaning of these truly remarkable works of literature. She quotes Pascin as saying, 'It takes twice as much genius to paint in America as it does in France,' but she clearly doesn't understand.

The artist in America, she complains, has been barred out of Society. The disadvantage?—

'Take another example, D. H. Lawrence, son of a coal miner, as Dreiser was son of a foreman in a woollen mill, and Sandburg of a blacksmith, and Anderson of a house painter. In *Lady Chatterley's Lover* sex seems awkward, even inexperienced, but English manners are authentic enough to create the illusion of society. And why? Because Lawrence found himself dragged into drawing rooms, whether he liked it or not. . .'

That's what snobbery (there was Mrs. John Jacob Astor, for instance) denied the American artist. But this need to know upper-class manners appears for the most part indistinguishable from the

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need for 'luxury,' the need to master 'the art of enjoyment.' This art is interpreted in a way that makes the heading of this review excessively unfair to Arnold Bennett.

No one who has not read the book can imagine the tone in which the hero's very ordinary and very ugly sexual promiscuity is exhibited—'this trait which forced selection and action.' Genius, it appears, needs the ideal woman. The ideal woman is hard to find—one after another the experiments turn out disappointing. But Dreiser has at any rate decided that eighteen is the right age. and nowadays generally picks on that.

Miss Dudley's book, then, deserves to be called classical for the completeness with which it presents its case, and should be read by all who wish to be clear why Western civilization seems less and less likely to favour art and literature. It was a great service to make it accessible in this country.

F. R. LEAVIS.

ASPECTS OF SEVENTEENTH CENTURY VERSE. Selected and prefaced by Peter Quennell (Cape, 6/-).

HENRY VAUGHAN AND THE HERMETIC PHILOSOPHY, by Elizabeth Holmes (Blackwell, 4/6d.).

It is to be hoped that there really is a public such as is implied by Mr. Quennell's anthology—'the ordinary reader of poetry' for whom Mr. Norman Ault's and Mr. William Kerr's collections are inappropriate because 'they include much that can only interest students and is of representative rather than strictly æsthetic importance.' One suspects, however, that he will have few *readers* who do not know of, and use, the larger collections. And, as a matter of fact, it is hard to imagine a serious interest in 17th century poetry that acquiesces in Mr. Quennell's distinction and demarcation. This is not to say that his pleasant little book is not welcome.

But it is disquieting to find him saying that 'Jonson was to vanish as a literary power; his ponderous Latinism was gradually to lost its spell . . .' 'Ponderous Latinism' is not a good description for the manner represented by numbers 192 and 193 in the *Oxford Book*, and this manner, one suggests, should interest very much the anthologist of the period that includes (say) Thomas Carew and

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Andrew Marvell. And is 'vitriolic' the right word for Dryden's satire?

Miss Holmes speaks of Mr. Blunden as 'himself a metaphysical poet,' but nevertheless the critic never knows that he won't at some time be indebted to this kind of scholarship, and should be grateful.

F.R.L.

THE ABC OF ECONOMICS, by Ezra Pound (Faber and Faber, 3/6d. net).

The praiseworthy aim of this small book is 'to express the fundamentals of economics so simply and clearly that even people of different economic schools and factions will be able to understand each other when they discuss them'; but nothing else about the book is worthy of praise. Its contents are indeed so simple, if not clear, that it is impossible to review them in the light of ordinary scientific criteria. Perhaps they were not written in the light of such criteria. Their author is not a professional economist, and his book is not so much a contribution to that science of which he is so contemptuous, as a work of poetry—didactic, it is true, but through the medium of concrete image; emotional, and confessedly 'not proceeding according to Aristotelian logic.' Either it is this, or it is a rather unelaborate hoax. But whatever mission it may have been designed to fulfil, it cannot be commended. It is too naïve to be taken seriously, too ill-tempered to be regarded as a joke—in brief, a manual rather for the reader who is interested in Ezra Pound than for the reader who is interested in economics.

H. E. BATSON.

FOREST WILD, by M. Constantin-Weyer (Routledge, 7/6d.).

This delightful book (adequately translated) by an accomplished French-Canadian settler, will provide pleasanter leisure reading than any novel from the circulating library and is in addition a book, as distinct from ninety-nine per cent. of those in the publishers' lists, that ought to have been published: it has a function. M. Weyer communicates with rare fidelity and charm the quality of existence in a Canadian clearing—the building of his house there, his ranch and trapping activities, and his observations of

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wild life. *Forest Wild* will go on the shelf with the works of George Sturt, Adrian Bell, Fennimore Cooper's *The Pioneers,* Younghill Kang's *The Grass Roof,* Hudson's *A Shepherd's Life* . . . and for contrast *Middletown.* One finds of particular value M. Weyer's acute comparisons between the decaying Indian and the half-breed who has superseded him, and notes without surprise his final departure from the wilderness when the railway arrives, bringing with it civilization in the form of not merely Norwegian and Breton immigrants but of ' James Sullivan, a hundred per cent. American, and one determined, he said, to remain American on Canadian soil ' who ' believes that civilization means the right to vote, water-closets, and the art of making doors which will shut tight.' For its incidental attractions *Forest Wild* would appeal to the adolescent, and is recommended for school libraries as an introduction to the major changes and the drift of civilization in our time.

Q.D.L.

HOW TO USE A LARGE LIBRARY, by E. J. Dingwall, D.Sc. (Bowes and Bowes, 2/6d.).

We recommend this book to all who have occasion to work in a large library—such as that of the British Museum—unless they are convinced that they know all that there is to be known on the subject. We wish, for the sake of the complete beginner, that Dr. Dingwall had mentioned that the present British Museum catalogue has occasional lapses in its alphabetical arrangement, and that a good number of foreign authors are entered under their, sometimes little-known, family names. These are the only omissions that we have been able to find in an excellent handbook.

We are glad to note that *The Oxford Outlook* now carries on as *THE NEW OXFORD OUTLOOK* (first number, May). Whether to be agreed or disagreed with, a serious critical organ is to be welcomed. Postal, 2/8d. a copy or 7/6d. a year. Blackwell.

NOTE.—The Editors wish to thank the anonymous donor of £2 ' for use in connection with *Scrutiny.*'

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THE *SCRUTINY* MOVEMENT IN EDUCATION

TO discuss whether the education movement that *Scrutiny*, with the associated books and pamphlets, in any case represents might now be profitably made more explicitly a ' movement,' a meeting was held at Cambridge at the end of the last May Term. The following opening to discussion was given:

To-day a great many intelligent men and women are going in for teaching as something more than a *pis-aller*. I don't mean with any illusions about the present state of things in education, but with the conviction that there, if anywhere, it is worth attempting something—that something must be attempted there if any effort of any kind to deal with the problems of modern civilization is to be of any effect.

This conviction, of course, formed an essential part of the motive towards founding *Scrutiny*, which proposes as its function, among other things, that of providing men and women in schools, colleges and universities with lines of communication and a focus. But we have from the first had more in mind than merely to save the isolated individual from the depression and decay incident to isolation. We have always intended that a positive movement should develop—a movement to propagate and enforce a clearly realized conception of education and its function. Such a conception, of course, would involve a conception of a desirable society.

We're not proposing that we should proceed to formulate a political programme and start to stump the country with it. The focus of our attention is upon education, and the political strength of the movement is that it makes an entirely fresh approach to the essential problems of politics—an approach that circumvents old obstacles and impasses, because it goes behind and beneath the inveterate preconceptions and prejudices. [Here followed some exemplifying from the implications and reception of *Culture and Environment*.]

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How far, and in what ways, political implications need to be made explicit will vary from time to time and from occasion to occasion, and will, no doubt, be a frequent matter of discussion in the movement. Immediately, perhaps, basis enough for agreement and common understanding is to be found in *Scrutiny* over the past year. To quote briefly from some of the many passages dealing with cultural tradition, the use of leisure, and economic and political change, will serve to recall the general position. It is that of those

> ' who think that the inevitability (and desirability) of drastic social changes makes an active concern for cultural continuity the more essential, and that the conditions of clear thinking, and of wisdom with regard to human values and ends, do not need the less attention because we are, inevitably, to suffer more confusion and disorientation.'

> ' To hope that, if the mechanics of civilization (so to speak) are perfected, the other problems (those which Mr. Dos Passos is mainly preoccupied with) will solve themselves, is vain . . .'

The Marxian theory itself, we contend,

> ' brings the Marxist to the point at which he must contemplate a quite different relation between culture and the economic process from that of the past. To put it simply, instead of dictating to the mass of mankind their uses of time, the economic process will free their time, in large measure, for uses dictated by inner human nature, if there should be one capable of dictating.
>
> ' But is there such a thing as " inner human nature "? The Marxian theory (and historical forecast) would seem to leave little room for it, though implicitly postulating the need for a very potent one, to take over when the Class-War ends and the economic process recedes into unobtrusiveness ; and that is why the Marxian future looks so vacuous, Wellsian and bourgeois . . .
>
> ' We assume an " inner human nature," and our recognition that it may be profoundly affected by the " economic process " persuades us that it must rally, gather its resources and start training itself for its ultimate responsibility at once.'

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What it comes to is this: that at a time when the process of civilization tends more and more to be mechanical and blind, it becomes vitally necessary to energize consciously and systematically for the continuity of the cultural consciousness; to assert the humane values; to insist that an adequate realization of human ends is not easily achieved, and that, unrelated to it, practical and political action is likely to be worse than useless. If one asks in what ways one can propose, with any hope, to give effect to this conclusion, there is no reasonable answer but 'education.' Some may think that when cultural dissolution has gone so far that all the organs and functions of culture have been perverted to the ends of the machine—when, for instance, the function of literary criticism (or Arnold's 'Function of Criticism') is in abeyance and the B.B.C. regards itself as an educational institution—this answer is not reasonable. If so, there is no hope.

But one takes the opportunity that offers, and, actually, there is in education, we know for a fact, a considerable minority, and potentially a much larger one, aware of the state of things and anxious to do all they can to vindicate their function. And in education, as nowhere else, corporate spirit can be mobilized for disinterested ends—ends obviously disinterested. In education, to take the first examples to hand, the power of the press, of the advertiser and of the literary racket can be challenged as nowhere else. Education, that is, is very unusually practical politics, and without a movement in education it is difficult to take any kind of politics seriously.

The aim proposed, then, stated in the broadest way, is to form among those teaching or intending to teach, in school, college, university and adult education—among those in all branches of the educational service—a body of people actively conscious of the common function and bent on concerted effort to further it.

As for the kinds of particular activity that would mean in practice, there's no need to do more than throw out a few random suggestions. For instance, here in Cambridge, it is absurd that those going in for teaching (I mean those positively interested) should get no more than the Training Colleges offer. Immediately it is possible, by pooling the experience of those already in posts, to study with profit the kinds of

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situation one is likely to find oneself in when one gets into a school and is faced with trying to do something. Then there is the discussion of teaching-technique. Here a great deal of exchange and pooling of experience is already going on. Clearly, the possibilities of profitable co-operation are unlimited (the Editors of *Scrutiny* are continually getting requests for practical advice).

But suggestion is really superfluous. The extant numbers of *Scrutiny*, together with the associated books, provide theme, matter and impetus enough. And there is much to be done by way of initiatory propaganda. If an obviously important and immediate issue, calling for the mobilizing of opinion to corporate effort, is wanted one can point at once to the Examination incubus. This offers unusually favourable opportunities ; a very wide sympathetic response is waiting to be released and made effective. The issue, moreover, is central, and an adequate challenge is unlikely to come from anywhere but *Scrutiny*.*

* * * * *

After this opening the discussion became general. It was agreed that any elaborate machinery of organization was to be avoided. Such organization as was worth having, at this stage, would develop spontaneously—in local 'cells,' so to speak—with a minimum of incitement. It was finally agreed to circulate a report of the meeting.

Further copies of this leaflet, then, can be obtained from the Editors at 6, Chesterton Hall Crescent, Cambridge (please say how many are wanted). Those who are in a position to initiate groups are invited to do so, and it is suggested that they may find circulation of the leaflet a good opening move. The Editors will be very glad to have reports of anything that is done, though they cannot undertake to acknowledge them adequately, since they are overwhelmed already with secretarial work.

Further announcements will be made in due course in *Scrutiny* or by other means.

August, 1933.

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*See *Scrutiny of Examinations* in *Scrutiny* for September, 1933.

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